DARE TO BELIEVE

"Let us be confident in approaching the throne of grace."

Hebrews 4:16a

"Child of mine, come forth to meet me,
Let me take you by the hand."

- The Searcher's Song

- by The Rev. Ruth Taylor

We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the Lord, and the wonderful works he has done.....that the generations to come might know, and the children yet unborn; that they in their turn might tell it to their children; so that they might put their trust in God, and not forget the deeds of God, but keep his commandments; and not be like their forefathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, and whose spirit was not faithful to God. *(Psalm 78. 4, 6-8)*

DARE TO BELIEVE

A portion of the autobiography of Ruth Taylor, recounting the experiences of Ruth and her husband Herb during over fifty years of prayer ministry in the Church, and written simply to bring glory to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Foreword

I have just returned from a fifteen-hour voyage from Prince Rupert to Port Hardy through the magnificently scenic Inside Passage of northern British Columbia. Awaiting my return was the script of Ruth Taylor's book, Dare to Believe, a record of her own journey with the Holy Spirit, through Inside and Outside Passages, in deep water and shallow.

I am aware of the grace-filled presence of the Holy Spirit that shines through these pages because of the on-going recovery from my own personal struggles. I need to tune in frequently and with gratitude to such recovery, and have found in Ruth's testament a validation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in surprising and exciting ways.

It seems as if the Holy Spirit has dared Ruth to believe, despite the many challenges, disappointments and set-backs that she has faced. With a sense of urgency and humour she comes through these with integrity and a never-ending faithfulness in her Lord. The stories are laced with incisive references to Scripture appropriate to the varied personal encounters and issues that touch on these people's lives. Let me add one further from the season of Pentecost:

"Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues."

Ruth's stories are told with great confidence and assurance of the presence and power of God. How blest it is to be able to read such heart-warming capsules when we are deluged with heart-breaking items in the news!

This is indeed a book in which to learn about the heart of the Christian Faith, dealing with the present and on-going life of faith with all its anxieties and challenges, punctuated with music and art, and highlighting the amazing working of the Holy Spirit.

And so, dear Reader, as you embark on this adventurous journey, I wish you *Bon Voyage!*

Introduction –

"I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works that I do myself; he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father." *(John 14.12)*

The enormous challenge in those words of Jesus are not often taken seriously, even by serious Christians. Conditioned as we are to "seeing is believing", it is not easy in our western society to step out in faith, without seeing.

However, in over fifty years of involvement in the demanding ministry of Christian healing, I am pleased to report a few of the many things I've been privileged to witness and experience. It is my hope that the stories on the pages of this little book will strengthen you in your faith and perhaps open your eyes to the possibilities inherent in the above words of Jesus.

One of the great blessings I have received through this ministry has been the privilege of actually seeing many positive results from faith-full prayer. Living as we do in this topsy-turvy world, we need constant assurance that the Good News is true – Jesus did actually rise from the dead; he is living among us, doing the same kind of work through the Holy Spirit that he once did while in human flesh. We need assurance that he does keep his promises when we dare to believe them.

This personal report is designed to be part of a larger work, my autobiography, but it seemed to be appropriate to print it separately as well. Its purpose is simply to bring Glory to God, in thanksgiving for his unfailing love and mercy "new every morning" shown to me, his betimes reluctant soldier and servant. It is dedicated to my wonderful parents, May and Cecil Wilson, and my late husband Herb, all of whom contributed far more than they ever knew to my Christian education and personal development. Thanks be to God.

Ruth Taylor
Moose Jaw, Sask.

NOTE: *Scripture references are from the Jerusalem Bible unless otherwise indicated. Names and places have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals in the stories, except where they were happy to be known to the reader.*

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I. Prelude to Ministry

A SCRAP OF PAPER ON THE FLOOR

Having lost their mother at the ages of three and five, my husband and his older sister were raised by their maternal grandparents. They were brought up in the Anglican Church in a mission-minded parish which took the virtual "orphans" under their collective wing.

Herb was nurtured by various members of the congregation, but particularly by succeeding Rectors who made a profound impression on him. Through youth groups, bible classes and Fireside Hours, and odd jobs at the Rectory for pin money, he found community and a desire to perhaps some day be ordained for parish ministry.

Then came World War II and six years in the Army with two stints overseas. At the end of that time Herb found himself with a wife and son and an incomplete High School Diploma. After two unsatisfactory secular jobs he was again "fathered" by a kindly and wise Rector through whose friendship the initial leaning towards the priesthood was rekindled.

With some trepidation he applied to a nearby Theological College for admission, but they required that he complete his High School subjects. Since we needed an income, not an "outgo", this was just not an option.

With the refusal painfully fresh in his mind he attended Church the next day. After the service on our way out of the Church, Herb stooped to pick up a scrap of paper on the floor (always neat!). No place to put it, so he stuffed it into his pocket.

To make a long story short, it was an appeal for workers for the Anglican Indian Residential Schools. On the rebound from the previous day's disappointment, we sat down and wrote out our resumes. With little time to either plan or think, we were at once interviewed and accepted, packed up, and moved north to the end of the railway, and thence by boat to Moose Factory Island on James Bay. By this time we had two sons and another on the way.

When our new Bishop heard of Herb's desire to be ordained, he set him a course of study, examined and accepted him, and ordained him in June, 1949. When God has chosen someone, not even the Board of a Theological College can stop him! All it took was a little scrap of paper on the floor.

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We know that by turning everything to their good, God cooperates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose.
Romans 8.28

The Story of Robbie

Our third son, Robbie, was born with Down's Syndrome. He couldn't sit up without support, let alone stand or walk. His muscles were spastic, so he couldn't feed himself or direct his hands at all. His eyes didn't quite focus but he responded to music or personal attention with glee and would laugh and giggle.

At the age of three he was welcomed into a newly established wing of the Ontario Hospital at Orillia where he received excellent 24/7 care for a nominal fee.

Robbie's brain may not have functioned normally but he taught his parents a great deal about spiritual things. His move to the hospital came before we became involved in the healing ministry, but as we learned more and more about Jesus' power to heal today, it wasn't long before we felt the need to be more intentional in our prayers for our son. On our next visit, then, we laid hands on him as we prayed for God's power to fill his little body, mind and spirit.

It was several months before we were able to visit Robbie again, but as we entered his room he greeted us with obvious pleasure. When Herb reached out towards him, Robbie took his hands and put them on his head as if to say, "Do it again, Dad!" It was the only time we ever saw him direct his own hands with any sense of direction.

Since we lived far away, our visits to the hospital were limited. Sometimes a family friend would come with us on the long drive south. One of these was a strong, active Christian who prayed for Robbie regularly. Robbie would respond to her the same as to us, though of course he didn't know the difference between parents and anyone else. However, it was different when another friend came with us who was not a praying person or even a church-goer. It was as if she didn't exist. Robbie paid no attention to her whatsoever.

This raised some interesting questions in our minds. Obviously, Robbie's spirit recognized a kindred spirit (i.e. the Holy Spirit) in another human being, and it appeared to be the only reality to him. I began to think about the spiritual bonds between people, as different from social bonds, and other theological questions. How should the Church minister to the mentally handicapped in a way they can grasp in their spirits, bypassing their brains, as it were?

One other incident remains etched on my memory. Several parishes (Episcopalian) in Massachusetts had invited Herb to conduct healing missions for them one summer. Naturally he shared with them about Robbie. One of them, as a result of the mission, formed a healing prayer group and put Robbie's name at the top of their list. When Herb

got home, I took a few days to drive down to visit Robbie at the hospital. When I checked in at the office, the attendant in charge said, "Oh, I'm so glad you've come. We were on the point of phoning you to come a couple of weeks ago because Robbie was refusing to eat, was very agitated all the time, and lost a lot of weight. Then suddenly he settled right down and has been eating normally again. That was a week ago today, actually. He seems to be okay now."

On returning home I told Herb all this. He checked the calendar and said in an awed voice, "That was the day that new prayer group met for the first time!"

I'll be forever grateful to God for the gift of Robbie, our "retarded" son. He was a spiritual giant....now at home in the spiritual world with which he was so familiar.

This is the victory over the world – our faith. *I John 5.4b*

* * * \

Eight-year-old Alice

As a normal part of his priestly ministry, Herb visited the hospital frequently; it was right at our back door. He would pray for sick parishioners, automatically reaching out to touch them as he did so.

One day it was reported to him that a young girl from the parish had been in a car accident and was in a coma. She had been admitted to a small hospital some distance south of town. She had been in a coma for several days. Herb immediately drove down and found her still unconscious, her mother by her side, wearied from her anxious watch. There had been no change in the child's condition. After a brief chat Herb put his hand on the little girl's shoulder, asked God to restore her to complete health, then left and drove home.

Next day he returned to see how she was, only to find her bouncing around on the bed like any healthy eight-year-old. The mother joyfully explained:

"Yesterday when you left, I heard you get into your car just below this window. When the car door slammed shut, Alice opened her eyes, said, 'Mummy, I'm going to be sick', vomited a little, then sat straight up and asked, 'Is there anything around here to read?'

This incident, followed by several other unexpected healings in the hospital next door, was unnerving, to say the least. What on earth was going on?

Then one evening, being out of other reading material, Herb reluctantly picked up one of the Sharing magazines. There he saw a notice of a School of Pastoral Care for clergy being offered by Agnes Sanford and her husband, the Rev. Edgar Sanford, at Whitinsville, Massachusetts, somewhere near Boston.

In response to a sense of urgency, Herb decided he must go to that, and so it was that we planned our summer holiday to arrive at Whitinsville at the right time. I dropped my agitated husband off at the Conference Centre on a Monday, then continued on to a campground where our two sons and I spent a pleasant few days. On Friday we returned to the Centre to pick Herb up and begin the long trek home.

Herb had arrived bristling with questions and chips on his shoulder. By Thursday he was a different person, even assisting Agnes. It was a major turning point in his life, and his career. I, too, had to make hard adjustments.

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(Jesus is speaking:) These are the signs that will be associated with believers: ..... they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover. (Mark 16.17a,18c)

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Did you know *that in the early days of the Church a man could not be ordained unless he could prove that he had the gift of healing?*

Schools of Pastoral Care

Agnes Sanford and her husband, the Rev. Edgar Sanford who initiated the Schools of Pastoral Care for the training of clergy and lay leaders of the Church for the healing ministry. They worked under the auspices of the Episcopalian Diocese of Western Massachusetts.

Agnes was the author of many books including "The Healing Light", "Behold Your God", "Creation Waits", "The Healing Gifts of the Spirit", "The Healing Power of the Bible", as well as various novels and devotional books.

Many leaders and teachers throughout North America received their basic training under this gifted couple. This picture was taken circa 1957.

One of the many stories told by the Rev. Edgar Sanford has stayed with me over the years. He was a young and eager missionary just arrived in China to look after his first parish there. A Chinese Catechist (lay reader) had been looking after the parish until a new priest could come. A saintly old man, he faithfully carried out his duties and came regularly every week to report on everything he had done.

On one of his early meetings with Edgar he said, "I visited Mr Chang who has not been well; I baptized the new baby for the Lin family; and I cast an evil spirit out of old Mrs. Wong."

"You *what*?" exclaimed Edgar. Surprised, the catechist repeated, "I cast an evil spirit out of old Mrs. Wong."

"And how did you do that?" Edgar asked, astounded.

Wonderingly the catechist replied, "Like Jesus did! Is there any other way?"

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(Jesus to Nicodemus): "You, a teacher in Israel, and you do not know these things?" *John 3.10*

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I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. *Matthew 18.3*

"PREP" SCHOOL

My memories of Sunday School were never very attractive. Those impressions have not been erased even yet. I remember cold, hard, dusty chairs in damp and dingy church basements and NOISE. Discipline always seemed to be a problem as a lot of the children were uninterested in the lessons. One of my teachers was a prim lady of ancient vintage (probably about 25) who had "duty" written across her face. I did enjoy the lessons when I could hear them above the din.

Summer holidays were a treat because I could sit upstairs with the big people and could join in the singing. On occasion I would even listen to the sermon. One Sunday it was on the story of Jesus talking to Peter after the Resurrection and telling him "Feed my sheep....feed my lambs....feed my sheep."

Those words never left my consciousness. They revolved around and around in my head for what seemed like months. Every time I went to Church, I recalled them vividly. The reason was obscure to me then, of course, but years later I recognized them for what they were – my first call to ministry. Over half a century later that scripture was read at my ordination.

As soon as I was old enough to read, my mother gave me my very own bible. On the flyleaf she had written, "Read some every day" which I did. Even at that age I wondered why there were no miracles any more like the ones Jesus did. Nobody seemed able to answer my questions, until I met Agnes.

Pray all the time, asking
for what you need,
praying in the Spirit on
every possible occasion.
Ephesians 6.18a

There came a time when I found it impossible to believe that prayer worked. In Church we prayed for all sorts of things that never did happen, like peace. Praying "set" prayers out of a book seemed like a useless though pious exercise. Sermons never spoke of prayers being answered any time since the bible was written. So why bother?

My skepticism came to an abrupt end one time when I was sent to one of Agnes Sanford's Schools of Pastoral Care, against my will. This particular school was directed towards clergy wives and laywomen, held at the same conference centre where my husband had such a life-changing experience. Like him, I arrived there full of questions and quite uptight.

Physically, mentally and spiritually I was at a very low ebb, exhausted, depressed, and with feet that hurt at every step. Wearing dressy shoes was excruciating, especially when my feet were swollen, which was most of the time.

On the first afternoon of the conference Agnes Sanford gave an introductory address to the forty-or-so women gathered in a large spacious room.

"Prep" School (cont'd)

"Your purpose in coming here was not to seek for healing but to learn how to pray for others who need healing" she said. "But I would like to demonstrate how it's done," she went on, "so I'll ask any of you who do need healing for anything to just move your chairs into a smaller circle in the middle of the room."

Reluctant but desperate, I thought, "What the heck, I can't lose!" and shoving my puffy feet back into my shoes, I picked up my chair and limped into the circle along with about fifteen others.

Agnes began with the woman straight across from me, asking what the problem was. A heart condition, was the answer.

"Oh, hearts are easy!" said Agnes with all the confidence in the world, as if it were as simple as plugging in a kettle. As she laid her hands on the woman's head, I heard a distinct "click" like the sound of a door knob turning, and from then on my attention was riveted on this remarkable person who seemed to know a lot of things I'd never heard of.

One by one Agnes prayed for each person, matching their needs with specific and graphic prayers. All at once she was standing in front of me asking, "What would you like prayers for?" Then a lot of things happened, in what order I still don't know. I'd been sitting with crossed knees, my right foot extended, and there was my shoe hanging loosely from my toes. Looking in utter amazement at my suddenly skinny feet, I stammered, "Oh, you don't need to pray for me now – my feet are healed!"

Take delight in the Lord, and he shall give you your heart's desire.
Psalm 37.4

"But I'm going to pray for you anyway," Agnes said, unperturbed. And she did. What she said, I don't remember, but I certainly recall the result – it was a complete reversal, a conversion, if you like. All doubt flew out the window. I really, truly believed.

Some people seem to come to faith naturally, growing into it. But God has to hit some of us over the head with a two-by-four before we awaken to the truth. I empathize with all doubters, Thomas included, and I also understand how some people can recall the moment they first believed.

Before I arrived home three people had asked me to pray for them and my prayers were answered. Thus "Feed my sheep" began to take on new dimensions.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous deeds! And blessed be his glorious name for ever! And may all the earth be filled with his glory. Amen. Amen.
Psalm 72.18,19

The Searcher's Song

Ask and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him.

(Matthew 7, 7,8)

The Searcher's Song

Words and Music © Ruth Taylor 1976

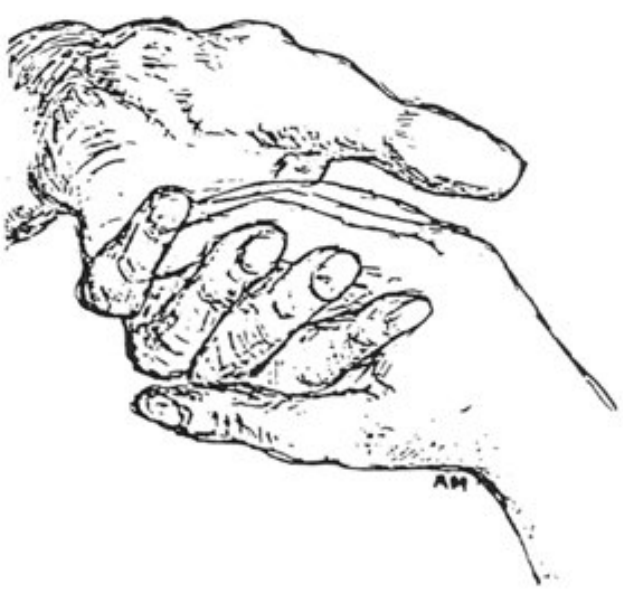
I don't know where to find you,
I've been looking everywhere;
Pull the curtain from my vision,
I'd just like to know you're there!

Raise your voice so I can hear you,
Shout your message in my ear;
Stretch your hand out, touch me firmly,
Show me clearly that you're here!

I don't know how to love you,
I can't serve you till I do;
Save me, Lord, I'm tired of doubting,
Make me into someone new.

"Child of mine, come forth to meet me,
Let me take you by the hand;
Give yourself into my keeping,
You don't have to understand!

"Trust the love I proved in Jesus,
Just believe my Word is true;
Rest completely on my promise –
I've been all this time with you!"



The kingdom of God is not just words, it is power. *I Corinthians 4.20*

II. Steep Learning Curve

Jimmy

Elated by his recent experiences in Whitinsville, Herb preached a series of sermons in September on what he had discovered about healing through faith. Not everybody in the parish was impressed at first. One day as we were walking home with our arms full of groceries, one of our parishioners stopped his car in the middle of the street, rolled down his window and shouted angrily, "Have you two gone crazy?" before zooming away.

In mid-October Herb announced that in conjunction with St Luke's Day he would be in the Church on Friday evening to pray for the sick and would welcome anyone who cared to join him. Further, if anyone wanted prayer for healing for themselves or anyone else, they could come to the Church or phone us to have the names put on a prayer list.

About 26 people showed up on Friday night for what was the first of weekly healing services that continued until we left the parish. Several names had been phoned in, the first being that of Jimmy, a young lad who had been diagnosed at the Mayo Clinic as having an inoperable brain tumour.

Jimmy had been falling asleep frequently at his school desk, more and more often until he was simply not able to function at all. His parents had mortgaged their home and business to pay for his treatment, but nothing worked. His response to prayer was immediate. A trip to the Mayo Clinic again in January proved that the tumour had disappeared. By March Jimmy was the star player on the school hockey team. Great thanksgivings!!

Harry

Another phone request was from a man in his sixties who was rapidly going blind. The doctors had found a tumour behind each eye, both inoperable.

Just before Christmas this "blind man" came up the back lane to our rectory, unaided and unaccompanied, to say Thank you for all the prayers which were continuing to work.

"I can't stay," he added with a big grin, "I have to hurry home to watch my favourite TV program!"

Mrs. "B"

There was a widow lady in our parish whom I will call "Mrs. B". She suffered from frequent bouts of arthritis that completely immobilized her. She had a daughter and son-in-law who looked

after her faithfully year after year, mowing her lawn, cleaning her house buying her groceries, and driving her to Church every Sunday, among other things.

They were unfailingly kind and generous to her, despite her miserable personality. She never ceased to complain. Nothing they did was ever done "right". They were constantly besieged with bitter remarks. Moreover, Mrs. B told everybody else about their alleged shortcomings. Eventually she landed in hospital with a severe bout of arthritis.

My husband had visited her at home and knew what she was like, but he hastened to the hospital to see her. After listening to her monologue for a little while, he could stand it no longer. Breaking abruptly into her complaints, he startled her into silence while he told her what remarkable people her daughter and son-in-law were, what saints they were to have put up with her all these years, and how fortunate she was to have them nearby to help.

Mrs. B burst into sobs and wept copious tears while Herb prayed for her to be healed, first of her selfish attitudes and then of her arthritis. Both prayers were answered with amazing speed. Later that same day she booked herself out of the hospital, took a cab home, cleaned her house from top to bottom, then phoned her daughter and son-in-law to apologize for her behaviour and ask for their forgiveness.

The whole family was healed. Sometimes the best medicine is a dose of truth.

Marion

After he had worked with Agnes Sanford for several summers, parishes near and far invited Herb to conduct healing missions for them. Those were the days when missions were week-long events. The first invitation was from Ottawa, where we met Marion.

On the first night of the Ottawa mission, Marion came up to the altar rail to ask for healing of her back. She was wearing a brace and had been for some months. The service was quite long as there were over forty people requesting prayer.

The next evening Marion was back at the altar rail, this time saying that she just wanted to offer thanksgiving to God. Her face was radiant. Herb said, "But you're still wearing the brace!"

"Yes, I am! But it doesn't matter any more, because last night God healed my marriage!"

The best healings are not always physical. We should not be afraid to ask God for our *greatest* need.

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If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
Matthew 7.11

In those early days, the mid-1900s, when God was arousing the Church's interest in the healing ministry, there were very few books on the market about it. We all had to learn through experience as we practiced faithfully what little we did know. One of these "lessons" was as follows:

Timmy

Our Lay Reader's five-year-old son fell suddenly ill with meningitis. We were summoned to the hospital early one morning by that alarming news.

Calling some of the people who attended our healing services, we asked them to pray on the hour and on the half hour for little Timmy. Then we joined the parents at his bedside in concentrated prayer. The hours passed as the young boy lay in a coma, but as we watched it was remarkable to note that on the hour and the half-hour Timmy would stir and open his eyes briefly before sinking back into unconsciousness. He died later that afternoon, leaving behind some as yet unanswered questions:

What would have happened had there been 60 or 80 people praying on the hour and the half-hour?

What if there had been 600 or 800 praying instead of 6 or 8?

What if there had been 6000 or 8000 people praying? I'm sure Timmy would have survived.

In the early church there were miracles of healing every day recorded in various books. When someone died who was important to the Christian community, they would gather the whole community together to fast and pray, and people were actually raised from the dead, just as Jesus did it.

To quote Agnes Sanford, "The reason we don't see miracles today is because not enough people believe and pray." Surely the Church is negligent in not raising up more people who know the power of prayer and are committed to praying for one another.

Ellen

Ellen was subject to periods of depression for much of her life. She called us for prayer one Sunday because the next day she was scheduled to go to the hospital for shock treatments, and she just couldn't face it.

"I've had shock treatments five times already," she said tearfully, "and I'd rather die than go through that again!"

Herb immediately hurried to her home to have prayers with her, asking for God's healing. Almost at once the depression left and she cancelled the treatment, but by Saturday the darkness was creeping back again. More prayer and again a reprieve, but the shadows began to return once more. It was a puzzle.

During this period we were preparing a series of lectures on the healing ministry for a diocesan gathering to be held in our parish, and were doing some basic research into its history. In

the Canons of Hippolytus we read that Christian Churches were regarded as temples of healing by the general public, especially effective in mental disorders, which was a priority of the Church. I quote: "Healing depends on church attendance for public prayer except for the dangerously ill in which case daily visits were made by the clerical body." (The date of the writing escapes my memory, but it was likely around the end of the second century.)

The words "daily visits" stood out for us, and so we began this kind of "treatment" for depressed people. The results were most encouraging. Ellen responded to the daily laying-on-of-hands with prayer without any more setbacks. After a few weeks of this, with instruction how to pray for herself too, it was obvious she was healed. Herb told her, "Don't be surprised if other people come to you now for help with their depression!"

Several weeks later Ellen phoned again and we thought, "Oh, no, not again!" but her voice was clear and strong. "You told me that other people might ask me for help, but you didn't tell me how many!"

We too were making daily visits to others in need, and the Lord worked with us, as He promised to do. These were heady times, and our faith grew in leaps and bounds.

O Lord my God, I cried out to you, and you restored me to health. Psalm 30.2

Harold

For about ten years after his Whitinsville experience, Herb returned to the Conference Centre to assist Agnes and Edgar Sanford in their Schools of Pastoral Care. At one such gathering an Episcopal priest made an appointment with Herb to make his confession, which he later made public as a witness to the healing power of Jesus Christ. Two years later he explained what had happened.

After receiving absolution and a prayer for healing, he had returned home feeling as if his problems were gone. And for 6 months they seemed to be. But his diocesan duties took him to a large city far away for meetings. Sure enough, the old urge returned. Late the first evening he went back to his hotel room and donned his old disguise— sneakers, black jeans and sweater – planning to hit the streets in search of satisfaction in one of the gay bars where he wouldn't be recognized.

"As I put my hand on the doorknob to go out, I got the most awful pain in my gut. So I hurried to the bathroom where I vomited rather violently and then had a bout of diarrhea. By this time the urge was gone. I undressed and went to bed. And I've never had the urge since! I'm free!"

In the light of recent discussions on homosexuality, I keep asking the question: Does God "fix" anything that doesn't need fixing???

Bernie

Bernie was a high-school teacher in his forties. He was part of a group of professionals who formed the social elite of his community. Bernie had a bottomless store of off-colour jokes, a foul mouth, and a blasé attitude. Then he got cancer.

The phone call we received came from a hospital in Toronto and the news was startling – the doctors gave him only a few short months to live. Herb drove down to Toronto, a long trip, and appeared at the patient's bedside. Bernie was utterly amazed and deeply touched.

During the next few weeks he came to our healing services, usually accompanied by two or three of his friends. Eventually they brought him in his wheel chair. A new Bernie emerged as the foul language disappeared, and his bravado also. He soaked up prayer like a sponge sitting in water, and when he died, he went in peace, expecting to meet Jesus. It was a healing of the soul that touched many others.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He forgives all your sins and heals all your infirmities. He redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness. *Psalm 103.1-4*
(Book of Alternative Services)

Prayer 101

During the 1960s I had a Sunday School class of small boys, about nine little imps age 8 to 11. It was my aim to make sure that no matter what else they learned, or didn't learn, they would all learn how to pray. So we prayed — standing up, sitting down, kneeling, eyes shut, eyes open, etc. At the end of the term I asked them which way of praying they liked best.

One hand shot up at once and he answered with great enthusiasm, "I liked it best when we stood in a circle and held hands!"

"Oh? And why did you like that the best?"

"Because that's where the power is!"

Certainly, out of the mouths of babes truth is spoken and God is glorified.

(Jesus, to Peter)... it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. *Matthew 16.17b*

Elizabeth

On one of Herb's trips to the States to conduct a mission, he was met at the airport by a very apologetic Rector.

"I know you must be in need of rest and quiet, but we really have to go straight to the Church before going home. There's a lady waiting there to meet you. She is out of the hospital by special permission, being under treatment for severe depression. I hope you don't mind."

Herb was ushered into the Rector's office and introduced to a dreary-looking woman who scarcely even looked at him and who said not a word.

"Would you like to tell me what the problem is?" he asked gently. No answer.

He tried again several times to evoke some response, but she just continued to sit there as if in a daze. "Very well, then, I'll tell you what the problem is!" And he proceeded to do so, outlining her whole sordid story as the Lord gave him the words to say. The woman raised her eyes in utter astonishment and finally spoke. She confirmed everything he had said, making a full confession of her sin and shame which she'd never told anyone before. She received absolution, prayer for healing, and counsel.

Next day Herb heard the results of his interview. Elizabeth had walked out with her head held high and went back to the hospital where her doctor examined her and pronounced her well. The depression was gone.

* * *

Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, and this will cure you. *James 5.16a*

Doctors' Report

There were several doctors in our congregation at that time who, unknown to us, did a survey of their patients who were hospitalized. After a year or so they presented their report: People who received prayer had far less nausea after anaesthetic, recuperated more quickly, had less pain, and were discharged up to two days earlier than people who received no such ministry. (Maybe some day Science will admit that God is actually real... Numerous doctors and nurses already know that, but somehow it isn't factored into the healing process.)

Touch Me Now

Touch me now, O Father, show your loving care;
Let your vast compassion all my sin repair.
Mercy is your watchword, holy is your Name!
Only you can save me, make me whole again.

Touch me now, O Jesus, heal me by your grace;
Let me see the lovelight shining from your face.
Lay your hand upon me as I humbly kneel,
Trusting in your goodness and your pow'r to heal.

Touch me, Holy Spirit, set my heart aflame!
Make your home within me, all my soul reclaim.
Fill me with your power, make my spirit new:
Love, Joy, Peace my witness that God's Word Is true.

Glory, laud and honour unto God our King!
Louder still and louder let our voices ring.
Praise to God the Father, praise to God the Son.
Praise the Holy Spirit and the Three-in-One!

Words and Music © Ruth Taylor 1978

A.M.

III. The Ministry Spreads

Michael

In a city on the west coast Herb was asked to conduct a week-long mission on the healing ministry. Wisely the Rector involved other clergy in the city in the various services, morning and evening. The Rev. Michael R. was very reluctant to participate but finally agreed. Afterwards he told everyone what had happened.

Attendance was very good. In order to accommodate everyone who wished to receive the laying on of hands with prayer and yet avoid a long waiting period, two clergy ministered at the altar rail and one each ministered at the two front pews.

Our reluctant friend was stationed at a front pew, wondering why he was doing this because, frankly, he didn't believe in it at all.

The first person who came for prayer was a native lady who earnestly desired healing of her painful arthritis. Michael laid his hand on her kerchiefed head and prayed for her, then moved on to the next person.

Next morning as Michael was heading to Church for the early Eucharist, he met the Indian lady on the street. She greeted him with great fervour and showered him with thanks for the prayer. "See?" she said, raising her arms up over her head, "it's all gone! I'm healed!"

The astounded Michael hurried to church then with a renewed faith and a whole new attitude and happily attended every service that week. From there he embarked on a very fruitful healing ministry which brought him into a leadership role that took him across the country.

I wonder if that little native lady ever realized how many miracles found their beginnings in her humble request for just one.

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After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit.....The seventy-two came back rejoicing, "Lord," they said, "even the devils submit to us when we use your name!".....It was then that, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said, "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever, and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do."

Luke 10. 1, 17, 21

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Andrew

It was late one Sunday night when the phone rang. "I know it's late, but can I come and see you?" The voice was deep and hoarse and it belonged to a man I knew only casually as a successful and responsible business man with a beautiful wife and four equally beautiful daughters. We'll call him Andrew.

Half an hour later he was at the door, shivering and bedraggled, his hair wet and uncombed. Apologetically he came in and sat on the edge of the couch. For a full half hour, perhaps more, I just listened as, his head bowed and eyes on the floor, Andrew told his sordid tale of incest, adultery, theft, betrayal, lies, cover-up, alcoholism and abuse.

Earlier in the day Andrew had taken a carload of liquor and beer out to his cottage with the aim of getting very, very drunk. By evening he was ready to carry out a secret plan. He walked out into the lake fully intending to drown himself. But for some reason he couldn't explain, he later found himself walking back to shore, very sick but very much alive. So he put on some dry clothes, made the phone call, and there he was, waiting for something to happen, he didn't know what.

As I stood to lay my hand on his shoulder, he stood too, head still bowed. I asked God's forgiveness for his life of sin and for his attempt to end the life he'd been given. Continuing to pray, I asked the Lord to pour out His forgiving, healing love upon this penitent, to cleanse him, wash him clean, and to let him know how precious he was to the heavenly Father. Then in silence I prayed for the healing and restoration of his soul. He was scarcely breathing as he swayed on his feet, and stood, and stood, and stood. I knew God was working powerfully in him.

Eventually Andrew opened his eyes, lifted his head and straightened his shoulders. "I felt as if I was standing under a warm shower!" he said in a voice full of awe and wonder. Then with a grateful "Thank you!" and eyes shining, he walked to the door and was gone. I'd swear he was six inches taller when he left than when he came! He arrived a broken soul; he left more of a man than he had ever been.

Such is the power of our gracious God who through his Son Jesus heals the broken hearted and brings sinners to repentance. To him be honour and glory for ever and ever!

P.S. Andrew died of natural causes about eight years later. I am confident of his salvation.

■■

If any of you is in trouble, he should pray; if anyone is feeling happy, he should sing a psalm. If one of you is ill, he should send for the elders of the church, and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him. The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. James 5.13-15

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New Life Community

One of the most exciting periods of my life was in the mid-'70s when the charismatic renewal was at its height and before I was ordained.

I had been appointed to the newly formed Diocesan Evangelism Committee which met in Regina under the chairmanship of the Dean. The Bishop had received an invitation from the Roman Catholic Charismatic Community to send delegates to a weekend leadership conference that they were sponsoring. Not knowing what else to do with it, the Bishop passed it on to the Evangelism Committee.

The invitation stated that they had received a prophecy suggesting that the Anglicans be included; hence the invitation. Only three of us were free to attend and we agreed to go. Thus three timid Anglicans found themselves surrounded by 300 overwhelmingly enthusiastic Roman Catholics, 298 of whom were quite unaware of our presence.

It was an interesting weekend and we learned a great deal, but at Sunday's final session everyone was asked to gather into their own parish groups. They did, and we three huddled together in a corner. The purpose of the exercise was to pray for our parish needs. Being from three different parishes, we just pooled our requests, beginning with the little group that met weekly in my home. (This was about as stiff and proper a church group as you could imagine, and it was obviously going nowhere.)

We had scarcely begun to pray, eyes closed, when we heard a door near us open and close and footsteps coming our way. A man joined our little circle and at once gave a prophecy: "The people for whom you are praying are bound in chains of fear, but keep on praying and the chains will be broken." Then he left us and disappeared. We never saw who it was, but his words rang encouragingly in my consciousness.

A social time followed during which I met a group of young people from Moose Jaw. Before I knew it, I had invited them to come to my Thursday night group, pending permission from the group.

So it came about that the following week half a dozen young, gung-ho R.C. charismatics came (late) with their bibles, song books and guitars to join us in prayer. Their energy and enthusiasm for the Lord sent shock waves into our sedate gathering, but before the evening was over we had agreed to continue meeting with them, alternating the venue, and to participate in a Life in the Spirit seminar with them.

That was the beginning of the New Life Community, an ecumenical charismatic group which met in various church halls until finally renting a public building near downtown. By this time our numbers had grown to 50+, roughly half R.C., a third Anglican, with a few from other denominations. An Anglican priest served as Chaplain, and a strong music ministry developed. Occasional weekend workshops and seminars were

held, and we attended various conferences, even as far away as Calgary. In addition the group sponsored a black student from South Africa to attend school here.

But the life-blood of the Community was the Thursday night prayer meetings when various people would wander in off the street looking for help. Several of these remain vividly etched in my memory.

One of these was called Jean. She was an Anglican "preacher's kid" caught in an abusive relationship with an alcoholic husband, and she suffered from arthritis though barely middle-aged. A friend had invited her to come for prayer, but her husband did everything in his power to prevent it.

One Thursday night when she planned to come, he took her to a restaurant for a late supper instead, but late or not, she persisted and he very grudgingly dropped her off at the hall. Jean told us that at supper her hands were so crippled that she couldn't cut her food, and had dropped the salt and pepper shakers. Then she added that she had fallen down the stairs at home 17 times – she'd counted them!

That triggered something in me and I burst out, "You didn't fall...you were pushed! Nobody just falls that often!" Immediately we began to pray against a spirit of self-destruction – a powerful prayer from the 12 or so people gathered around her. Suddenly relaxing, Jean slid gently to the floor where she lay for some time. This is called "resting in the Spirit" and happens sometimes when God is doing a very deep healing. We left her there to attend to other people's needs.

Some time later Jean sat up, stood without assistance, picked up her large bible off the floor, and holding it in one formerly crippled hand, began to dance with sheer joy, shouting praises to God. Her hands were normal.

Two other incidents involved people walking in off the street. One was a very agitated young man who was so upset he could scarcely speak. He'd been fired from his job that morning and claimed to be on his way, after stewing all day, to "kill the bastard" who had got him fired. We surrounded him and prayed until he calmed down, then fed him cookies and coffee and one of the men took him home in a relatively calm state of mind.

The other was a woman whom we'd often seen walking slowly past the hall all bent over and eyes on the ground. One evening she came in the open door out of curiosity and admitted she needed help. As we began to pray a picture was given of a weary woman carrying a very large, heavy cross on her back. At the same time came a prophecy: "The burden you are carrying is not yours to carry. If you give it to Jesus, he will take it away." She looked up, told us it was her son, then with a grateful "Thank you" went out the door and on her way. Next time we saw her she was walking upright, waving and smiling.

These and other exciting events were pivotal to my own development in preparation for the ministry to which I was being called. One other I must record:

Early in the formation of the New Life Community there were inevitable clashes of ideology, theology, and personalities. Only God could have brought the unity we eventually achieved out of such a diverse collection of people. The hardest thing for me was to overcome the deep-seated prejudices I had acquired against Roman Catholics, from the very Protestant environment in which I grew up. In the group also were men who couldn't abide even the idea of women in leadership, and a woman who thought we should always say the rosary.

My own healing came when a few of the R.C.s said to me, "We'd like to pray for you!" Surprised and pleased, I readily agreed, secretly wondering why they'd want to do anything for this outspoken and very prickly Protestant.

The results were immediate. They literally prayed God's love into me. I could feel it being poured over me in a warm flood. Here I was, half way through my fifties, and for the first time in my life I knew in the depths of my being that God truly loved me! I was deeply moved, and still am, by that memory, and forever grateful to those caring young people who discerned my need. (I also thought it was kind of sneaky of God to use a bunch of those annoying RCs to do what needed to be done!)

# # # # # # # # # # # # #

Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.

Psalm 66.14

The Gift of Knowledge

One of the ways God empowers his people is by the gift of knowledge. Through this gift of the Spirit, some fact or truth is revealed which is necessary to the healing or guidance of the person(s) involved in a particular situation. This fact or truth is something that could not otherwise have been known.

The first time this happened to me was very early in the work of the New Life Community when we were all new to the Spirit's activities. We had gathered around to pray for a teenage girl who was bothered by many headaches. The minute I touched her shoulder I had a mental picture which seemed to me to be ridiculous. It was a picture on the cover of the children's book, Jack and the Beanstalk. I started to laugh and described what I was seeing. Everybody else laughed too, except the girl, who looked at me in amazement.

"That's the book I always wanted my Dad to read to me when I was little! I must have heard that story a hundred times at least!"

So we knew there was a connection to her headaches somewhere in here, and their source was linked to her father and to that period in her life. However, being so young in this ministry and very inexperienced, we didn't follow it up. Perhaps the girl may not have been ready for any further revelation. At any rate, the headaches disappeared.

The Gift of Knowledge (cont'd)

Quite often when we pray with people, the Lord gives them directly a picture in their mind that speaks volumes to them. One such young man asked for prayer because he was feeling left out when his friends recounted all sorts of stories they remembered about their childhood. He was disturbed that he couldn't remember anything until the age of eight. As I prayed for him the Lord gave him several scenes to remember. One was of his father in overalls with a big hanky stuck in his pocket (he ran a gas station). His Dad was picking him up and pretending to throw him into the air as they both laughed in delight. It was a great comfort to him.

Once when praying for a man in the hospital who was gradually wasting away for no discernible reason, a picture came to my mind which was simply of a very small black dot at one side of a large pink blob. When a specialist was finally called in to solve the problem, he eventually found a small stone blocking the bile duct.

"Physician, heal thyself!"

Many people involved in bringing God's healing to others find it hard to pray for themselves except in a general way. But the same rules apply and they do work.

Late one afternoon I prepared a one-dish meal for supper in a large old iron frying pan – the kind that was all of one piece, including the handle. Then I made the mistake of going back into the garden to finish a small job out there. When I came back into the kitchen with muddy hands I found the burner on the stove red hot and the food bubbling and steaming at an alarming rate.

Dealing with the mud by a quick rinse under the tap, I turned around to the stove and without thinking, picked up the pan to remove it, with my bare hand. The pain flashed through me from head to toe as I dropped the pan and brought my throbbing hand up to my mouth, breathing on it as in my mind and heart I sent an SOS to the Lord, praying in tongues inside my head as I breathed out. The pain subsided within a few seconds, and I hurried to get the meal on the table.

After supper I took the time to examine my hand as I was curious to see what damage had been done. The only evidence to remind me of my stupid action was a thin red streak down the length of two fingers where they had been too close together to allow my breath to touch them. No sign of a burn, not a blister. Thanksgivings!

Another day I was hanging the newly washed bedroom curtains with one foot on the bed and one on the old-fashioned steam radiator under the window. Suddenly I lost my balance and fell, smashing my shin-bone on the radiator on my way to the floor. Within seconds a large lump like an egg appeared on my leg, pulsing with pain. Without a second thought, I put my hand on the lump and asked God to heal it. He did, immediately. The lump went down as quickly as it had come up, and I was left with only a bruise, and no pain.

Praise to God

Words and Music © Ruth Taylor 1976

NOTE: This melody is like a Scottish reel,
with a quick beat, non-stop from first to last.

Refrain:

Praise to God, sing praise to the Father,
Praise to God, sing praise to the Son,
Praise to God, sing praise to the Spirit,
Praise to the Trinity, Three in One.

1 He's my God, my heavenly Father,
He's my God, Creator and King,
He's my God, almighty in power,
He's the ruler of everything! (Ref.)

2 He's my Lord, my blessed Redeemer,
He's my Lord, my Saviour and Friend,
He's my Lord, my Healer and Brother,
He will love me to the end! (Ref.)

3 He's my Life, my strength and my vigour,
He's my Life, the light of my mind,
He's my Life, the fire of my spirit,
Pure and true and eternally kind! (Ref.)

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous deeds! And blessed be his glorious name for ever! And may all the earth be filled with his glory. Amen. Amen. Psalm 72.18,19

IV. God's Providence

FROM SORROW TO JOY

Patrick Tomalin came from England in 1966 to study theology in Saskatchewan. He was ordained in 1971 and became a priest in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle. While in theological college he married, and a daughter arrived after he moved to his first parish. In that parish the marriage ended and, in due time, divorce followed.

Patrick had strong views on re-marriage after divorce (against) and the ordination of women (definitely thumbs down). In spite of the latter conviction, he sought counsel from a female Priest-to-be (me). We had met when I, along with another priest, led a parish mission in Patrick's parish, a mission which began Patrick's involvement with the charismatic renewal movement within the Anglican Church.

Simultaneously a friend of mine, Dianne, was also seeking comfort and counsel as she endured the aftermath of the sudden accidental death of her youngest son and the failure of her marriage. At the same time Dianne had to deal with an insistent urge to study for ordination. Through normal diocesan activities and meetings, she and Patrick had known one another for quite a number of years.

"I feel Patrick's pain," she would say to me. "He seems so sad and lonely." And Patrick would comment on his admiration for Dianne. There I was, like the ham in a sandwich, privy to two sets of feelings and unable to breach the confidence of either. It was an interesting situation, to say the least.

But the Lord had his own plans. Following some heavy reading and some even heavier wrestling with God in prayer, Patrick's views on both re-marriage and ordination softened and changed. God had opened the way – and the two "found" each other. I had the great joy of preparing them for marriage (re-marriage, that is!), and performing the wedding ceremony.

Dianne's subsequent ordination was an equally happy affair. Since then the clergy couple have ministered together, both involved in the healing ministry. At the time of writing they are ministering jointly in an Anglican/Lutheran parish in British Columbia to people who love them both.

What a wonderful sense of humour God has!! And his timing is always perfect.

Destination Ordination

Life began to speed up. I had served five years as Editor of the quarterly magazine of the Diocese of Moosonee, had studied at home to achieve the degree of Scholar in Theology from St Chad's College (1963), then embarked on a nine-year stint on the National Board of Anglican Church Women (originally Woman's Auxiliary). As Editor of their national publication, The Living Message, I traveled to every diocese in the Canadian Church, even across the Arctic and the Yukon, from Newfoundland to British Columbia. This opened up many opportunities for speaking and writing as well as insight into the workings of the national Church. My education was rounded out through involvement in the charismatic renewal where I learned the basics of spiritual direction, the healing ministry, and personal counseling. I was ready for ordination but the Church wasn't.

Then the impossible began to happen. When the subject of ordination of women was first introduced at General Synod there was a great uproar in certain areas, one of them being in my own home. Some male clergy, including my own ultra-conservative husband, ranted and raged and threatened to join the Roman Catholic Church if such a dreadful thing should come to pass. Needless to say, the subject was never discussed at our dinner table, or any other time.

In spite of such opposition the ordination of women became a reality in 1977 and the sky didn't fall. I was honoured to be asked to preach at the ordination of four women to the diaconate in Brandon Diocese, with mixed feelings as by this time I had given up all hope of being ordained myself.

In the mid-seventies I was involved with the New Life Community (see elsewhere in this little book). A crisis had arisen when the core leadership of the group was suddenly decimated by a spate of transfers and family moves out of province. There was pressure on me to assume more leadership responsibility, so I asked for prayer as we sought guidance.

Immediately there came a prophecy from one of the Roman Catholic women: "You are a priest of the order of Melchizedek." Everybody laughed! Prayer continued for a while, then the same woman spoke again: "As a token that the words you have heard tonight are true, you will receive a healing from the Lord."

For the next few days my mind was in turmoil as I assumed that the words meant I was to take on the leadership role. It was a task I really didn't think I could adequately do. Sunday morning at the early service of Holy Communion I was still struggling with this as I went to the altar rail. When I got home, I was shocked to realize that I had received not one healing, but two, unmistakably real. Still thinking that this was all about the group leadership, I resigned myself to the task, knowing I'd be given the needed gifts.

Destination Ordination (cont'd)

Later that week as I was walking along Main Street I met a lady from our parish who came diagonally across the sidewalk to meet me and without a formal greeting just said, "Ruth, when are you going to be ordained?" Since I knew she was very much opposed to the idea, I gave a flippant answer that it would happen when the moon was made of green cheese.

A week later, at almost the same location, a man from the parish went out of his way to greet me and ask, "Ruth, when are you going to be ordained?" Somewhat startled, I gave the same very flippant answer because I knew that he too was opposed to the ordination of women.

At this time I was busily preparing for a week-long parish mission in northern Saskatchewan and forgot about the incidents. On the drive north I stopped in Saskatoon briefly to visit one of the members of our Evangelism Committee who was attending Theological College there. "Allan" and his wife kindly invited me to stop in on my way home for a longer visit and a bit of rest. I readily agreed.

The following Sunday night then, I arrived in time for supper. While the children were being put to bed, I joined Allan in the living room. He looked up and without preamble said, "Ruth, when are you going to be ordained?"

Bingo! The shoe finally dropped! The light went on! How often does God have to tell me something before I get the point???? As I stammered and stuttered a denial, Allan went on, "Tell me why you aren't pursuing it."

"Three reasons," I replied. "First, I'm too old, fifty-seven this year. Second, my husband is totally opposed to it. Third, the Bishop is also opposed. Did you see his public statement to that effect quoted by Canadian Press just last week?"

Said Allan, "I still think you should try." And he made me promise to talk to my husband about it when I got home. Which I did.

When Herb came home for dinner, he usually buried himself in Time Magazine, but not this time. He just sat and looked at me. Taking a deep breath, I sputtered a bit, then said, "What would you think of my being ordained?" Without turning a hair he said, "Oh, if that's what you want, by all means!"

Somewhat in shock, I asked, "Well, how should I go about it?"

"Go and see the Bishop first, of course!"

Then I remembered, "There's an Evangelism Committee Meeting at Synod Office tomorrow; I'll see if he's in. But he's usually so busy, or away!"

When I arrived at Synod Office next day the Bishop was ambling about as if he had nothing to do.

"Could I see you for a few minutes?" I asked, hesitantly.

"Of course! Come on in. What can I do for you?"

Destination Ordination (cont'd)

"What do I have to do to be ordained?" I blurted out with as much confidence as I could muster.

"Oh, just write me a letter and I'll forward your name to the Committee that deals with applications."

Then, looking closely at his calendar, he added, "As a matter of fact, if you get your letter to me in two days, I could get you to the next meeting of the committee. It's in three weeks, and I know there's one space left."

I did. And he did. And I found myself at ACPO along with a number of other applicants being interviewed individually by various clergy and lay people.

That's not the whole story. There was a week-long mission in a local Anglican Church being conducted by the Very Reverend Michael Peers. I had only one free night when I could go, and that was Wednesday. During the service there was a question box brought out which contained only one question that night. It said, "What is your opinion of the ordination of women?"

Michael's answer was clear, "I used to be against it – until I met a woman priest!"

Then came the news that I had been accepted by ACPO. There followed even more good news: When our Bishop was retiring in June, the person elected to replace him was none other than Michael Peers!

I was ordained deacon on May 21, 1978 (our 35th wedding anniversary) and priested on November 16, 1979. When the moment finally arrived and all those hands were laid on me in blessing, the most precious affirmation was God's whisper in my ear, "Nothing has changed. You've always been a priest."

This year I celebrate 25 years as a priest. Was I too old?

The miracle was this: All the people God used to nudge (push!) me along his chosen path for me were actually opposed to the ordination of women, beginning with the woman who prophesied and including Allan in Saskatoon who applied the final boost. When the time was right, God simply removed all the barriers; they fell like a row of dominoes with such breath-taking speed that I kept saying, "Hey, not so fast! Whoa! I can't keep up! I don't feel ready!" After 15 years of waiting since acquiring my degree, it all happened in the space of three months.

Our God is an awesome God!

"Feed my sheep... feed my lambs... feed my sheep..."

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We forget that "impossible" is one of God's favourite words.

Max Lucado

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Jesus Christ is the same today as he was
yesterday and as he will be for ever.
Hebrews 13.8

HOW GOD PROVIDES

*All sacraments of the Church and all prayer can be effective vehicles of God's healing grace if received with faith and reverence. A combination of two or more works powerfully towards complete healing.

TURN AGAIN

Words and Music © Ruth Taylor 1977

As a father cares for his children, so does the Lord care for those who fear him. *Psalm 103.13*

Turn Again

Turn again! Turn again, my people, turn to me!
Turn to me, my people, how I long.....
....how I long to hold you tenderly!

Turn again! Turn again, my people, turn to me!
Turn to me, my people, how I long.....
....long to hold you close, so close to me!

*As a mother hen gathers all her little ones,
gives them shelter underneath her wing;
As a shepherd searches for his little lambs,
to the fold all warm and safe to bring.

So would I, so would I, my people, won't you come?
Turn again, my people, turn to me;
I alone can heal and set you free. (Repeat from *)

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

SALVATION – from its Latin root, "salus", means wholeness, health, and holiness.

BEING SAVED – means being made whole, healthy, and holy.

Working towards our salvation then means the process of allowing ourselves to be made whole, healthy and holy.

BODY

Our physical body is simply the house in which our soul lives while we are on this earth, and it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We have a responsibility to keep our physical bodies in good shape so that they do not hamper the work of the Spirit.

Our **soul** is even more important. It is made up of our mind, our emotions and our will, all of which are subject to the varied influences of the world around us, as well as the characteristics we have inherited through our parents. Every part of our soul needs to be "saved".

Our **spirit** envelops both body and soul, holding it together in unity. Since God is spirit, he communicates with us through our spirit. Our conscience is God speaking to us through our spirit.

BAPTISM is a sacrament and a mystery. I like to think of it as God planting a seed of his own Spirit in our human spirit. We are thus 'born' into his life, being joined with Him in this spiritual way. I believe He uses this 'lifeline' to connect us to Him, like a telephone, a means of communication.

God's Spirit implanted at water baptism

The Normal Christian Life cont'd

"Jesus saves" means that Jesus is the agent of our healing and holiness. He does this through the work of his Holy Spirit. In order to achieve wholeness, health and holiness, then, we must allow the Holy Spirit to work in every part of our being, body, soul and spirit.

God's Spirit released into whole being

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is inviting God's Holy Spirit to enter fully into every part of our being – body, mind, emotions, will and spirit. His entry is what brings the wholeness, health and holiness that God wants for us. Without this we will continue to operate from our humanness and in our sinfulness. With it we have access to all the power of God to change us day by day into the people He created us to be.

NOTE: Babies baptized in extremis *very often are instantly healed. In our combined experience the only ones who died were six-month "preemies".*

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TOOLS of the TRADE
(Spiritual Gifts)

Instead of the spirit of the world, we have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us. I Corinthians 2.12

(Listed in I Corinthians 12.7-11)

SPEAKING GIFTS:
The power to say what the Holy Spirit dictates

Tongues: The ability to speak or pray in a language you don't understand. It may be one of the languages in common use somewhere in the world, or an angelic tongue. (I Corinth. 13.1: "of men or of angels"). Most often used in private prayer, in intimate praise and adoration of Jesus. In public meetings it may be used as a form of prophecy. Occasionally this gift is given to foreign missionaries to communicate the Gospel to isolated people who have no recognizable tongue.

TOOLS of the TRADE cont'd

SPEAKING GIFTS cont'd

Interpretation of Tongues: May come in a public meeting where someone is speaking a message in tongues. The message comes simultaneously to another person in a familiar language and must be passed on to the hearers. If no one can interpret, the speaker must do so. The speaker always has a general sense of what the message is.

Prophecy: A message inspired by the Holy Spirit for a specific person or a group of people in a specific situation. It is not foretelling as in predicting. It is forthtelling or proclaiming. The message is always positive, encouraging, upbuilding, inspiring or of quiet guidance. It may contain gentle reproof but never condemnation. The confirmation of the prophecy is when it actually happens. Scripture has ample warnings about false prophets.

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POWER GIFTS:
The ability to do what the Holy Spirit wants done

Faith: Not what we generally think of as faith, which arises from our belief system and is always with us. The power gift is a sudden surge of faith in a particular situation when the recipient knows for certain that God is ready to act right now.

Healing: is likewise not a gift you just walk around with all the time. It is given in a particular situation when God's timing is right. Regular on-going prayers for healing prepare the way for that moment.

Miracles: Power over circumstances, like averting disasters, etc. These do happen more often than we realize.

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GIFTS OF REVELATION:
Acquiring of knowledge by supernatural means

Discernment of Spirits: This is the ability to recognize what evil force is at work. Some evil spirits have colour, some have an odour. There may also be a cold draft of air, feeling of chill, even hair standing on end. Conversely, the presence of the Holy Spirit brings calm, peace, relaxation and contentment.

Knowledge: Frequently when a person is being prayed for, someone will receive a mental picture or a word or phrase, perhaps a scripture verse, that reveals a fact that nobody could possibly have known except by direct revelation. It assists in knowing how to pray, brings encouragement, instruction, or hope and joy, and increases faith.

Wisdom: The gift of knowing what action to take in a certain situation. It involves an intense awareness of what God wants you to say or do.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL WARFARE

It is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the Sovereignties and the Powers who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens. Ephesians 6.12

Satan is real; evil spirits are real. The world prefers not to accept the fact, and even some Christians do as well, but both Jesus and the Bible proclaim their existence. The Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church are very clear about their reality. But part of the Good News of the Gospel is that God's power is far greater than any evil power, and that those who believe in Jesus have power over Satan too, bequeathed to us by Jesus himself, through the Holy Spirit.

The Anglican Church has always recognized the validity of exorcism; some dioceses have an official exorcist appointed from among the clergy. But in fact, it was a regular part of Jesus' healing ministry and as such was expected of his followers too. It is unfortunate that such work has received bad publicity through the media, and through the lop-sided teachings of some people who give Satan far too much credit and imagine a demon behind every fence post. In actual practice deliverance is a normal, everyday tool to use to bring healing to sufferers and is nothing to be afraid of. Such prayer is indicated when, for instance, a person has an ungovernable bad temper or a strong negative emotion like hate or resentment, likes to inflict pain on others, feels jealousy, or gives vent to a destructive rage, exhibiting violence or a desire to wreak revenge. All addictions also come under this category, obsessions, mania, and so on. Depression is a common indicator of the need for deliverance from some sort of oppression.

The term "spiritual warfare" refers to the constant battle between good and evil in which all Christians are engaged, whether they know it or not. The Book of Common Prayer service of Holy Baptism calls us "soldiers and servants", but we seem to ignore the military element in favour of the meek and mild servanthood. We need to rethink that, because being a soldier for Christ requires strength, perseverance, commitment, and a knowledge of the enemy's tactics. It also means we need to know what equipment we have and how to use it!

But victory is certain because "the spirit that is in us is greater than any spirit that's in the world" according to the first epistle of John, chapter 4, verse 4. Our tools are the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us. Spiritual enemies can only be defeated by spiritual weapons used prayerfully in the power of the Spirit. Pills won't cure depression but Jesus can.

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It was to undo all that the devil has done that the Son of God appeared. 1 John 3.8b

V Deliverance Ministry

"PROCLAIMING LIBERTY TO CAPTIVES"

Tommy

The first time I was called upon to use a prayer for deliverance in a formal setting was in a northern parish. A white couple had adopted an Indian baby boy I'll call Tommy. From birth he had many emotional and psychological problems and coped with life only with the aid of various drugs. Nothing worked very well, and he couldn't sleep without heavy sedation.

Everything in the house of any value had to be kept under lock and key because he would take it, never for himself at all but to give to other people. (A sort of Robin Hood complex?) At school this was an enormous problem as he took anything that wasn't nailed down! Even at Church, he would lift money off the collection plate as it came along. The family, the school, and the whole community were desperate for help.

As soon as I arrived to conduct a week-long parish mission, the Rector asked me to see what I could do for Tommy. Together we planned a strategy of a fasting Communion every morning, enlisting the whole parish for concentrated prayer, and a service of deliverance after school on Wednesday.

I was quite nervous about it all as I went to bed Tuesday night and lay awake for some time. Finally in the wee small hours the Lord spoke comforting words, "Relax, Ruth, this isn't any harder for me than a headache!" Then I slept.

Next afternoon the parents brought Tommy to the Church. I "sat him down" on the chancel step and sat beside him to introduce myself to him and explain what we were going to do. He went willingly with me to the altar rail for prayer and anointing. All through the brief service he was at ease and cooperative, and when it was over he went home with his parents.

The first thing that happened was that Tommy went straight to bed and slept for a full twenty-four hours. It was the first time in his nine years of life that he had slept without drugs. With continuing medical help and counseling he was able to finish his schooling and eventually live an independent life in the community.

* *

The cords of hell entangled me, and the snares of death were set for me. I called upon the Lord in my distress and cried out to my God for help. He heard my voice from his heavenly dwelling; my cry of anguish came to his ears. He reached down from on high and grasped me; he delivered me from my strong enemies and from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me.

Psalm 18.5-7, 17a, 18

God had anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil. Acts 10.38

People tormented by unclean spirits were also cured, and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch Him because power came out of him that cured them all. Luke 6.18,19

Healing the Addicted

One Sunday evening I received a phone call from one of the staff at a drug and alcohol treatment centre. I was known to them through guiding some of their clients through Step Five of the AA program. But this was different.

A young man was having withdrawal problems and insisted on seeing a minister right away. Since he was not far from the Church, I agreed to meet him there. With all the lights on in the church to guide him, I awaited his arrival. In due time I heard his fumbling steps as he came in the door and crawled on all fours up the flight of steps to the office. I guided him to a chair and tried to elicit some information from him as to what was going on. He made little sense, being almost incoherent, but he did claim to be a Christian. Realizing that conversation was out of the question, I asked him to come with me to the altar rail where I would pray for him.

We started up the aisle together, my arm in his to hold him steady. Every few steps he would stop and try to turn back, but I held him firmly and urged him forward. It took a while, but we finally reached the altar rail where he agreed to kneel. I stood beside him, praying out loud for God's guidance. Every little while he would attempt to stand up and leave, but I would push him down again and continue to pray. (It would have made a wonderful comedy act, I thought, smiling to myself!)

I have no idea how long it took, but after praying in tongues for some time, commanding Satan to release his hold on this child of God, the battle was won. The young man suddenly slumped over the altar rail like a rag doll, all his strength and resistance gone.

My prayers became thanksgiving and praise. Then I called upon God for protection for this man as he continued his journey back to normalcy. After a while strength returned to his body and he stood up, saying in a normal voice, "Thank you, I feel better."

Together we walked back down the aisle to the office, every few steps being punctuated by a joyful exclamation, "I feel better!.....I feel SO much better!.....I AM better!" Our ensuing conversation was not long but it was sane and sensible, with instruction as to how to keep Satan at bay. He left with a confident step, standing straight.

I never saw the man again, but several weeks later he phoned to say he had a friend going through much the same process. "How can I best help him?"

Clara

One morning a woman walked into my home without knocking and stood in the middle of my living room, wringing her hands, wide-eyed, and obviously quite desperate.

"If somebody doesn't help me, I'm going to do something stupid!" she blurted out. She really meant it.

She wouldn't sit down, so as I stood beside her, I asked her to tell me what had been happening to her. She was a big woman, taller than I, but she crumpled into tears and poured out a tale of grief. Through the broken sentences I gathered that she had suffered from depression most of her life and had lost count of the number of times she'd been sent to the psychiatric ward of the hospital.

"They just give me more pills, and that doesn't do any good. I won't go back there again. But **somebody, please help me!"** Her voice was low, but her spirit was screaming. I looked around, feeling helpless, but there was nobody there. Just me. And God.

I took a deep breath and plunged right in. "I'll do my best to help you, Clara, but I have a funeral in a little while. Can you wait until I get back? I'll come to your house as soon as I can and we'll have a good visit. Okay?" Clara nodded, a small glimmer of hope in her eyes. And she left.

Mid-afternoon – Clara was sitting across from me, a kitchen table between us.

"When I first wake up in the morning this big, black cloud comes down on top of me and I can hardly breathe. I'm scared to move, so I pull the covers up over my head and wish that I could just die."

"Clara, do you believe in God?" She nodded.

"Do you believe in Jesus?" Another nod. Progress. I began to talk gently about God's love and how Jesus came to set us free from the powers of darkness. She was listening now. More progress.

"May I pray for you, Clara?"

"I guess so, but I've prayed and prayed for help, and it doesn't come!"

"Let's pray together, then," and reaching across the table, I took her hands in mine and began to pray, briefly and simply. "Jesus, Light of the world, come to Clara now and cast away the darkness that is threatening to smother her life. Surround her with your Light and your Love and restore her to joy and hope and peace. Thank you, Lord. Amen."

"Now, listen carefully, Clara, because you have some responsibility for your healing. Tomorrow morning the very second you wake up, speak to Jesus and ask Him to stay close to you all day. Then, tell the darkness to stay away because you belong to Jesus and He is your Light. Okay?" She nodded her agreement.

When I asked Clara if she had a Bible, she went to another room and brought me a big, dusty family bible that obviously hadn't been used lately.

"That's fine, Clara, but you'd find a modern translation a lot easier to read and understand. And you need to read some every day because it's your guide book. Go and get one this afternoon. I'll come back tomorrow and we'll talk about it." She smiled.

Mid-morning next day Clara answered my knock promptly. She was a different person, excitement shining in her eyes.

"It works! It works! The dark cloud went away!" A new Bible lay open on the table, and I jokingly asked, "Did you read all night?"

"Not quite, but I got as far as Exodus 7." Why hadn't I remembered to tell her to start in the New Testament? And so began the first of many lessons in scripture and prayer. Clara blossomed in her faith.

It wasn't long before that faith was tested heavily. A few months later her only son phoned to tell his parents that he was gay. It broke their hearts to think that there would be no grandchildren to carry on their family name, but they were able to cope and to accept their son just as he was.

Heal me, Lord, and I shall be really healed, save me and I shall be really saved, for you alone are my hope.
Jeremiah 17.14

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? But I put my trust in your mercy; my heart is joyful because of your saving help. *Psalm 13.1, 5*

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Two weeks later Clara's favourite brother died suddenly of a heart attack. He was in his forties. Again they coped.

Troubles sometimes seem to come in three's... Clara's husband lost his business. Life seemed to beat against them relentlessly, but their anchor held and they weathered all the storms.

Bless the Lord for his perfect timing! Had Clara not found her faith six months earlier, any one of those three tragedies would have put her in the psychiatric ward permanently. But to my knowledge the darkness never came back.

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Be still, then, and know that I am God.
Psalm 46.11a

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Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall honour me.
Psalm 50.15

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The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and will save those whose spirits are crushed. *Psalm 34.18*

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It is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the Sovereignties and the Powers who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens. That is why you must rely on God's armour.

Ephesians 6. 12, 13a

I called in my affliction and the Lord heard me and saved me from all my troubles. The angel of the Lord encompasses those who fear him and he will deliver them. Taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are they who trust in him!

Psalm 34.6-8

Spiritual Attack

In the mid-1970s I was scheduled to conduct a week-long mission in a traditional Anglican parish. This involved six evening services, five children's talks after school, and a session with the youth. I planned to drive there on the Sunday, a long trip, to be ready to begin on Monday morning.

Saturday morning I woke up feeling strange. My left side felt very heavy, my legs were weak and my heart was racing. Faced with a long day of final preparations, I hit the panic button. Was I having a heart attack or a stroke? How could I do the mission in that state? Would I have to cancel? Should I go to the hospital? I flopped onto a sofa, weak and panting, and reached out for the bible on my coffee table.

Flipping it open at random, I was faced with the opening chapter of Jeremiah and the words God spoke to him. They resonated with me at once.

"Go now to those to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them for I am with you to protect you --- it is Yahweh who speaks."

On the strength of that, I stood up and commanded Satan in the name of Jesus to leave me at once because I was going to do what God was calling me to do. And I sang a hymn of praise at the top of my voice. Within ten minutes every one of those frightening symptoms was gone --- they had been totally fake. (A common ploy of the Evil One!) The rest of the day went smoothly and by nightfall I was ready to go.

By the end of the mission I knew why Satan had tried so hard to scupper it. The congregation was hungry for teaching and their minds and hearts were open. On the last evening the Church was full for the healing service. Almost every person there received prayer and anointing.

The Holy Spirit was certainly active that night, for during the final hymn — "Mine eyes have seen the glory" — somebody started a chain dance and the entire congregation followed, up and down among the pews, up the aisles and through the chancel singing "Glory, glory, hallelujah!" to the organist's inspired playing. There were tears of joy too. So deeply moved were they that they sang all the way down to the basement where they continued to dance until they sank onto the chairs exhausted.

This was an ordinary conservative parish, set on fire by the Spirit. And they grew from there.

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Overcoming Fear

One fine summer day when we were living in an old three-storey house, I embarked on a project to paint some of the dingy trim around doors and windows, balcony railings and outside staircase, leaving the top floor for a professional to do. Beginning at the bottom floor I propped our extension ladder against the wall, mixed the paint, and with brush and rags tucked under a belt, started up the ladder.

After three steps up the ladder, I knew I was in trouble. My legs suddenly turned to jelly; the can of paint hung heavy in my left hand while my right hand clung desperately to the rung in front of my face. I couldn't move; literally paralyzed by fear.

I'd never had trouble with heights or ladders before, so this was totally unexpected. Inching my way back down to ground level, I put down the paint and shakily shuffled back into the house, plopping onto a chair to collect my thoughts. The whole thing was bizarre.

Resist the devil and he will run away from you.
James 4.7

And then I knew what was wrong. I wasn't a stranger to spiritual attack in other ways, and this had all the earmarks. The solution was simple – just take control in the name of Jesus and command the spirit of Fear to be gone and never return. I did so. And he left. Free again, I went back to the ladder and with growing confidence finished the lower floor windows on that side.

Next day I found myself carrying a fresh can of paint as I jauntily and easily climbed to the second floor, my right hand only lightly touching the rungs, one after the other. Couldn't resist laughing on the way up, much to the amusement of a passer-by on the sidewalk.

In love there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love.
I John 4.18

HERB

One time about thirty years ago my husband and I drove to Manitoba for a brief holiday. On the way home we decided to take a different route just for a change. It was a pleasant sunny day with little traffic as we headed towards the Qu'Appelle Valley.

Our custom on long trips was to share the driving, an hour on and an hour off. Herb was behind the wheel as we began the descent into the valley on a long, wide curve. I noticed that the car was going more and more slowly, which was unusual as his accelerator foot was notoriously heavy. Then I saw that we were veering into the opposite lane, and alarms went off when I saw the white knuckles on the steering wheel and Herb's eyes staring fixedly straight ahead. Fortunately the road had broadened into four lanes on the curve and no other car was in sight. By this time we were just crawling.

In a voice as calm as I could make it, I just said, "Okay, Herb, just stop the car and put on the brakes." Stiffly and slowly he obeyed, stopping finally in the far left lane, facing downward. Quickly I got out, ran around to the driver's side, and motioned him over to the passenger side. Again, he obeyed, painfully slowly. By the grace of God no other cars appeared from either direction until we were back in the proper lane. Needless to say, I drove the rest of the way home. Silence reigned all the way.

Once home, I pressed for an answer. What had happened? And the story finally emerged.

Driving back from Saskatoon two weeks previously, late at night, Herb had encountered one of those late-spring snow and sleet storms. The highway soon iced over. As he headed down the hill towards Buffalo Pound Lake, the car began to slide sideways and literally skidded out of control from side to side all the way down to the bottom. When he was finally able to pull off on the shoulder, his whole body was shaking with fear.

There he sat for some time until he was sufficiently recovered to drive home. Typically, he hadn't mentioned the trauma, but now confessed that ever since then he'd had trouble driving down even a gentle incline. "Especially on the overpass at Belle Plaine," he added. "And I have a meeting in Regina tomorrow."

A quiet prayer for deliverance from a spirit of fear ended our discussion. Next night on his return from Regina I asked casually, "And how fast did you drive over the overpass?"

With a slyly sheepish grin he replied, "Oh, about a hundred and ten!"

Mission accomplished.

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The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid? *Psalm 27.1*

# #

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures for ever.
Psalm 118.29

JENNIE

Babies in the womb are extremely sensitive to emotional "vibes" from outside the womb. A teenager I'll call Jennie once exhibited unexplained episodes of extreme fear, not unlike panic attacks. Much prayer from time to time had little effect. It was a challenge to our prayer group.

Then one day in an unrelated conversation with her mother the cause was revealed. The mother was married to an unfaithful alcoholic who would come home after an absence and disrupt the household. On one of these occasions he flew into a rage and began swinging a butcher knife around. The terrified mother snatched up her two-year-old and a one-year-old and ran out the back door and up the alley to a friend's house. She was carrying Jennie in her womb at the time.

With this knowledge, then, we prayed with Jennie for the healing of that memory, asking Jesus as the Lord of yesterday to enter into that event, reveal himself to that as yet unborn child, and neutralize the effects of the trauma. He did. And Jennie had no more attacks.

Similarly, prayer worked for a grown woman who had had a lifetime struggle with a spirit of rejection. She failed in most of her relationships because she was convinced that nobody could possibly love or even like her.

After a failed attempt at suicide, she sought help. Prayer brought up a memory that had lain dormant all her life. She saw herself in her mother's womb listening to the voice of her father urging an abortion while vehemently shouting that he didn't want this child. Brought into this situation through prayer, Jesus embraced that wee child and wrapped her in his love. The spirit of rejection was evicted and the woman achieved a peace and joy that she had never known before.

■■■

"Now hear this...!"

Have you ever heard God's voice? He does speak, you know, clearly and unmistakably. Ask Him to speak to you sometime and He will. Expect it.

During the war it was very fashionable to smoke – just about everybody did. I was never a heavy smoker; it was just a social thing. In fact I didn't particularly like it, but the odour of a good cigar did tickle my fancy. One time as a child my parents took me to a fair, an exciting event, so many things to see and do. But when a big man smoking a big cigar came along, I followed him to get whiffs of his smoke.

Not surprising, then, that eventually I switched from cigarettes to cigarillos (rum-soaked, wine-dipped). It amused a lot of people but I didn't care.

Then came the time when I was seriously considering ordination and doing some self-examination, but hadn't quite got around to the question of smoking.

One warm summer day I spent the whole day at my favourite hobby, gardening. Every once in a while I'd take a break to sit in the shade and have a smoke and a cold drink. By late afternoon I was really tired, sat down on a lawn chair and opened the packet of cigarillos, my conscience twitching a little as I saw there was only one left.

Suddenly there was a man's voice behind me that said, "Ruth, this is ridiculous!" and I turned abruptly to see who it was.

There was nobody there. Nobody in the yard next door. Nobody in my yard or at a window. Nobody out on the lane. Then I knew! Picking up the remaining cigar and the empty box, I walked over to the garbage can and dropped them in. It was as simple as that. I never smoked again.

Other Voices

Sometimes we see in the news an item about a murderer who claims to have heard a voice, or voices, urging him to kill. This is a legitimate claim. Satan and his minions do speak to people in their inner selves, in the same way that God speaks to us, inside our heads and hearts. It's a spiritual/supernatural thing.

The difference is in the message. God's messages are always positive, creative, upbuilding, and full of his loving concern, or perhaps warning of danger or deceit. The Enemy, on the other hand, offers only lies, condemnation, temptation ("Just one more little drink won't hurt you"), or feeds into our selfishness, ego, vengefulness, lust, or whatever our weakness might be. Drugs and alcohol and the human propensity for self-interest ("They'll never miss a mere ten dollars") all open the door to Satan's messages. Sometimes there's more than a grain of truth in the cliché "The devil made me do it!"

Other Voices cont'd

At our baptism we promise to renounce Satan and all his works, but few people understand that we have to keep on renouncing him. Satan is a specialist in deceiving people. Jesus called him "the father of all lies". He can do imitations of practically all the gifts of the Holy Spirit with a demonic version of the gift of tongues, prophecy, fake healings, and "miracles". It is all deceit. For a humorous description of his activities read C.S. Lewis's "Screwtape Letters". Best of all, pay attention to what scripture says when it warns us of the things to avoid.

One of the most useful gifts of the Holy Spirit these days is that of "the discernment of spirits", particularly in light of the widespread use of drugs and alcohol and the amount of sexual abuse in our society. Because Satan can deceive "even the very elect" by his clever lies, we need to be always on the alert.

BRENDALEE'S STORY

A few years ago I was asked to work with a young woman who was a receptionist in an office. Her pastor was moving out of province and referred her to me.

My first interview, of many, was at her place of work. She was attractive and intelligent, definitely a city girl in dress and manner and outlook. We sat in a small interview room, facing each other. After some preliminary chat, I began as I often do by asking her what she believed about Jesus Christ.

Immediately she curled up in her easy chair, stiff and tense, raised her hands with fingers curved into claws, glared at me with intense hatred in her eyes, and hissed at me through clenched teeth. (I don't often get an answer that definite!)

Over a period of about two years I saw her from time to time. She did some journaling in the process. Sometimes it was full of longing to be free; sometimes it was a fierce denial of the person of Christ; always it was totally contradictory and confused. We never did come to a satisfactory resolution of her problems. She described her condition as having a huge, black, ugly beast living in the pit of her stomach. Eventually I came to believe that this "beast" was the strange "Christian" sect in which she and her sisters were raised, both their parents being elders. There were hints of abuse but nothing definite. She would have needed to renounce her church, which would have meant renouncing all her parents had taught her, in order to be set free, and up to the time she moved away, she was simply unwilling to even consider such a thing.

My prayer for this tortured woman is that in her travels she will eventually be able to do what is necessary to achieve her freedom. The memory of her pain stays with me. That was one of several times when Satan revealed himself to me visually in all his ugliness.

Come to Me

Words and Music © Ruth Taylor 1976

I called to the Lord in my distress;
the Lord answered by setting me
free. *Psalm 118.5*

Come to Me

Come, my little ones, bring your loneliness,
  Bring your weariness, come to me!
Come with eagerness, bring your emptiness,
  Come, my children, to me.
Gently I will be welcoming you,
  Softly I will be speaking to you,
Come, expecting to meet me,
  Come, my children to me!

Come, my little ones, bring your sinfulness,
  Bring your unworthiness, come to me!
Let me purify, cleanse and sanctify,
  Come, my loved ones, to me!
Gently I will be comforting you,
  Surely I will be strengthening you;
Come, accept my forgiveness,
  Trust yourself to my love.

Come, my little ones, come with trustfulness,
  Come with abandonment, come to me!
Leave your fretfulness, leave your heaviness,
  Rest, my children, in me!
Gently I will be cra-dling you,
  Softly I will be singing to you;
Hush, my little ones, hush now.
  Rest, my loved ones, in me!

VI. Witnesses

ERIKA'S STORY

(I write this at the request of Ruth Taylor, my heart-and-soul-prayer-healing friend.)

In 1993 my husband and I were pastoring in a loving, caring, congregation when I received a phone call from a niece that would forever change my life. She wanted to know if I had any memories of being sexually abused by my father. She was in therapy, and while journeying through her own story of childhood sexual abuse, she had a memory of our being in the same room. She remembered me being molested by my father. I told her that it was her story, her memory, and that I did not have such memories.

I had discovered previously that sexual abuse had occurred in the family, but I believed that I had been spared. I did remember being beaten, and some inappropriate sexual behaviour on my father's part in my teens, but I did not equate this with sexual abuse. I did have one vivid memory of a brother sexually violating me as a thirteen-year-old, but since he had come and asked for forgiveness years before, it had been dealt with.

When my father passed away in 1991 I had expected peace, for finally the struggle to please and honour him enough was over. Instead, my rage intensified, as did my migraines. Throughout my twenty-four years of marriage there had been bouts of rage, disproportionate, out of control, and for seemingly minor things. I knew that some of my rage came from the demeaning attitude and subservient treatment of women by the men in my family.

In my teens my father had begun beating me into submission and obedience, and shaming me into repentance. When I exposed the beatings to my pastor at age fifteen, he tried to help me practise avoiding being cornered by my father! The church regularly reinforced total obedience and submission to parents in all matters. I found no help there. My mother's role was silent and distant, only looking after all my physical needs.

Just prior to the phone call, the Lord chose to intervene supernaturally for me. Some friends who were Spirit-filled asked to come and pray over me for my healing. The Spirit had told them to anoint me with oil and pray over me in a specific part of the house. When they told me where, I knew immediately that the Lord was paying attention.

The Spirit had instructed them to pray for me while I stood in a doorway. I had a recurring nightmare, but had told no one about it: I was twelve when my father slapped me so hard while I stood in a doorway that my head bounced from side to side of the frame. When I came to, I proceeded to tell my father that I could hate him. That I could have said this to my Christian father and feel such profound hatred forever hounded me afterwards.

A month after my niece's phone call, I entered therapy. The day that my therapy was to start, my husband quoted Psalm 23 to me, but when he came to *"even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will..."* I begged him to stop. The fear that welled up inside me became so intense I thought I would be choked to death and silenced forever.

The therapist had me take Jesus by the hand at the beginning of each session and our prayer became that the Holy Spirit would lead me to those memories that I needed for my healing. My husband chose to attend each session with me; he became "Jesus with skin on" as I hesitantly took His hand. A web of deceit, incest and betrayal opened up to me. My mind, body and heart released the hidden fears, shame and rage through the telling of the childhood traumas. I was given permission to remember, to tell, to release the horror, the fear, the shame.

I recounted having been sexually used by my father for a period from too young for speech until adolescence. Three brothers also sexually violated and betrayed me until I left home at age nineteen. As well, during the first school years Christian male boarders sexually exploited me. In my teens there was groping, pinching and crude sexual comments made by males of my church. This was viewed as harmless, for after all, girls "liked that sort of thing".

A month into therapy I journalled a prayer: *Friday, October 1, 1993: Holy Father God, grant this child restoration, healing, untwisting and unraveling*

of her tormented, twisted, deformed, despairing, devastated, ripped-into heart and soul.

The one thing that kept me grounded throughout my healing journey was my personal transforming encounter with Jesus at age twenty-one. Over the next eleven years I would often return to the reality of that moment. In my adult life I chose to seek understanding of what it meant to follow and live out my faith and belief.

Through therapy I became aware that a part of me had become "dead" - dead alive is how I saw myself. Over the ten years, as this dead part became alive, I discovered myself filled with self-hatred and contempt even to the point of utter loathing. I felt worthless, useless, a nothing and a nobody. I felt I was to blame for what had happened, that I had always been guilty of being bad. I found that I did not trust --- in particular I could not trust men, and especially Father God. I couldn't feel tenderness nor compassion for anyone, especially for myself. The only feelings I had were anger or rage, mingled with moments of deep sadness or depression. My coping mechanism was to either fight or retreat into numbness. While attending church services I was the numbest. This made sense when I discovered that most of the incest had taken place on Sundays. As we were growing up, our family had regular altar times of prayer and singing. We were admired as a model Christian family. Outward appearance became the family idol.

During these years my anger at a Creator God who would let me be born into this kind of family became unquenchable. I struggled constantly with 'how things looked'. For long stretches I was unable to attend church; I was too afraid to attend bible studies. I was repulsed and had difficulty listening to anyone quoting me a bible verse or giving me a pat answer, or wanting to 'fix' me, or pull me out of my doubts, especially when they had to defend God. For years I could not allow anyone to pray for me audibly.

In my healing journey I benefited tremendously from various counselors who taught me how to think. I gleaned insight and perspective from retreats and seminars, books and movies, journaling, facilitated therapy groups and a continued on-going support group where I was totally accepted as I am. True friends stayed through the stretches of 'hell'.

I kept looking, demanding even, that God reveal to me just where and how he had been present during the bad times, as everyone kept telling me he had been. "Seek, knock, and ask" were put into practice and over the years I discovered a bigger, wider, and truly awesome Holy Presence. As a very young child I had received from him a place to "hide inside of myself". During church services he met with me up in the rafters while I was floating out of my body. I found myself tucked safely away under a huge wing, protecting my rage and my anger from destroying myself and others. I found Jesus beside me, being a perfect gentleman, never even just taking my hand without permission, never holding me without permission, never pushing himself on me, and never demeaning or degrading me; never minimizing my fears and pain.

Fear became replaced with an experience of true, wholesome, healthy love. The Lord granted me an adoptive daughter who became my atonement child, with whom I have been able to grow up and who helped me understand unconditional love. He granted me a foster son to cherish and care for. Hate became replaced with acceptance of self and of others. Contempt became replaced with affirmation and approval of self and others. Shame became replaced with understanding, holding others accountable, forgiveness of self and others.

However, the fiercest struggle was yet to be faced. In 2001 I became what I call a "Tasmanian devil". I was ready to devour, ready to strike down, ready to fight to a pulp, my rage knowing no bounds against the person who had stood, walked, held, loved me the most, and who always kept looking for my 'heart' - my husband. And it made no sense.

I searched for a Spirit-filled person gifted in spiritual warfare. Demonic presences had from time to time revealed themselves over these eight years. I became acutely aware that somehow none of the other work in my journey had gotten rid of them. The Lord brought Ruth Taylor into my life. First she taught my husband how to become 'head of his wife' by praying for my spiritual protection, and how to be my spiritual covering.

In one meeting Ruth proceeded to pray back in time through ten generations on both my mother's and my father's sides. This released and

delivered me from generational curses and bondages that had become strongholds in my life.

In following sessions the demons kept surfacing through all the layers of rage I had accumulated: rage at being abandoned, being violated, being treated like a piece of garbage that could be disposed of, at misplaced guilt and shame, at the church's teachings which empowered the perpetrators and kept me bound. Ruth would pray rebuking each manifestation in the power and blood of Jesus Christ and the demonic would flee and I would be released. Some demons seemed to be more powerful than others, like the one that hid Jesus' face from me so that I could not see Him because I was 'not worthy enough'. She taught me how these demons were always attached to internalized lies.

The 'Big One' as I named him was the one that had the strongest hold on me. It was attached to the lie that Father God did not love me; that I was not worthy of being loved because I had been so bad; that he was going to 'get' me and punish me, even yet, just as I had been warned over and over again by my father that he would.

With each rebuking and releasing my outbursts of rage diminished and lessened. My heart (with the additional help of a soft stuffed Pooh Bear) became softer and more tender and loving toward my 'self' and others too. I came to understand the verse "Love your neighbour as yourself".

The last and final rebuking and releasing took place in the fall of 2003 when I desired so much to be rid of all the 'little rages' that kept me bound. When Ruth prayed that day, I saw numerous little doors opening and scurrying of little feet fleeing - and the freedom that flooded my soul was ever so profound. Free at last - hallelujah! - FREE AT LAST! And *'the peace that passes all understanding'* became a reality.

Ten years to the month I journalled:

Friday, October 31, 2003: I have found my heart. I saw my heart whole, all the lost and missing pieces found – some mangled, some unrecognizable, battered, tattered, and stripped – but all in place. Holy Father God had answered this child's prayer.

Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11. 28, 29)

LORNA'S STORY

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20.30.

Many times I ask, "Why me, Lord?" not because of hardship but because of blessing. Why did He lay his hand on me from an early age? Why did He choose to reveal his power and love to a believing but unchurched girl? Why did He bless me with emotional and physical healing and deliverance? Why do I find it so easy to experience his presence? Why was I so hungry to know everything I could about the reality of Jesus' healing power? These questions can all be answered by the quotation above. Over the years I have had life, but it has not always been easy, and I have always been required to ask, seek and knock. Regardless of the circumstances, the Lord has used each situation to hone and encourage my faith and service to Him in His Name.

I have always known the reality of God the Father. Before memory He was with me. Asking Him to help was as natural as it was to ask my earthly father for help. I grew into adulthood content with my relationship with God and others. In my mid-teens I was comfortable in who I was and what I wanted to do. I had outgrown childhood anger and regular temper tantrums. By my late teens and early twenties I was a happy young woman, looking at life through joyful eyes.

I married in my twenties. After seven years of marriage we adopted a baby girl. She was the 8th Wonder of the World! I loved her from the moment we laid eyes on her; she added a wonderful dimension to my life. Two years later we adopted a baby boy, another marvel. My life should have been happy, and in most ways it was, with one exception. To my utter surprise and dismay I found myself in a state of anger more often than what I considered healthy for anyone. What could be wrong with me?

I went to see my doctor, a GP. Those were the days of valium, and he prescribed the tranquilizer for me. All that did for me was make me tired. The next step was a psychiatrist who told me I'd be fine when my youngest child went to school. This was not a satisfactory solution. I could not – would not – subject my children to three more years of angry shouting. As I left his office, I knew where I needed to go. God would have the answer to this escalating anger.

I went to church the next Sunday determined to look to God for the answers. The bulletin advertised that a group study on prayer was to begin. Nervous and shy, I signed up and began attending weekly meetings. This was the beginning of God's answer. Through that group I came to know the Lord's unconditional love for me as an individual. This knowledge opened the doors to spiritual growth and healing beyond my imagining....But I would have to wait seventeen years to be totally healed of the condition that had its genesis when I was two years old.

During those seventeen years the problem with anger ebbed and flowed. I was growing closer to the Lord, and during the good times we all had relief. Because I knew how hurtful I could be, I continued to ask the Lord to help me.

When the children became teenagers I developed thyroid disease which made my tirades at times both unbearable and uncontrollable. One day I was really angry over some trivial teenage misdemeanor. I knew that I was overreacting and out of control, so I left the situation in my husband's able hands and went for a walk. I had myself all quieted down and peaceful, confident, and grateful for my husband's ability to handle these situations. That was fine.....until I returned from my walk and opened the door. Suddenly out of my mouth came an angry tirade about the situation I had resolved to stay out of. Who was this out-of-control banshee that lived in me???

In January of 1995 my husband of 29 years died after a two-year struggle with cancer. This whole story might lead one to think that the Lord really had little interest in my family. That is not true. I had continued to grow in knowledge and faith. Just before my husband was diagnosed with cancer, I received healing from fear of hospitals and sickness. My husband came closer to the Lord. As a family we continued to love each other despite many trials. But the old anger was still boiling up. Since anger is also part of the grieving process, this wasn't helpful. I was so ashamed of myself, that I couldn't overcome these terrible outbursts that were always directed at my family.

After one such event I said to the Lord, "When am I going to be rid of this?" And He answered, "As soon as you deal with it." Well, over the years I had certainly been trying to deal with it, through the medical profession, counsel, prayer and study. But I understood clearly what the Lord meant, which was, I need to go and see Ruth who was the interim priest at my church. That decision brought the joy that is always present when the Lord speaks to me. I would do it. But I did wonder what Ruth would come up with that I had not already tried.

I made the appointment, and on the appointed day sat down in her office and told her my story. She asked me about my medical history – had I sought counseling? – prayer? I told her I had done it all. Then she asked, "Have you ever thought it might be a spirit?" I said No, but I was not averse to the idea. We discussed it a bit more and decided to see what the Lord wanted to do. It was all done very quietly. In the name of Jesus Ruth commanded the spirit of anger to leave me.

After the prayer we were sitting talking and suddenly I was able to see myself as though I were looking in a mirror. I saw a hideous-looking beast sitting on my shoulder. It was filled with a terrible hate and anger. Oddly I wasn't at all afraid. I said to Ruth, "I have something on my shoulder and he wants to tear my flesh apart." Without hesitation in the name of Jesus Ruth sent it off. As I watched it leave, Ruth described its appearance, exactly as I had seen it. I wasn't imagining things.

For three weeks I was wonderfully free of uncontrolled anger, and then there were signs that it was still there, weaker, but present. I went back to see Ruth. "Spirits are

allowed in through wounding," she told me. What was the wound in me that gave this spirit the right to be there? We determined that the wound was buried in my childhood. When I was two years old I became ill with a serious kidney condition which required surgery. I was in the hospital for several weeks. Again when I was five, I was put in hospital with appendicitis.

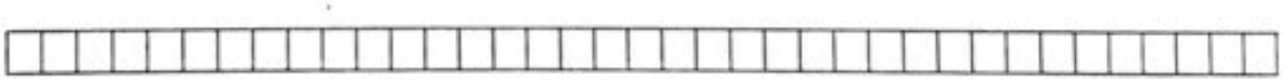
Those were the days when parents were not allowed to stay with their hospitalized children. The sick child was simply handed over to the nurse and taken away. That child could not see his or her parents again until the day he was discharged. One can only wonder at the insensitivity of that system and how many adults are still suffering the effects of that foolish policy. It caused me to believe that those who professed to love me had abandoned me just when I needed them most.

As an adult I understood policy, but the wound belonged to my childhood. Many people say, "How can a Christian have an evil spirit?" Often it is because of childhood wounding. An intense fear, anger, sorrow, or other strong emotion can enter a child's very soul and take root when a trauma occurs in the life of a vulnerable child.

Again Ruth and I sought the Lord. That day the spirit of rejection was rooted out, and the anger no longer had any access or legal right to my being. This was done as before, quietly and faithfully, in the mighty name of Jesus. Finally I was set free. And I began living in a freedom I had never before known.

It is nine years since that deliverance. What wonderful freedom the Lord Jesus has given me! Over this time I have received much healing in regard to the trauma of being left alone in the hospital. I have come to understand why my anger was directed at those I loved the most and who in turn loved me. I had a hidden mindset that I mustn't trust those who loved me because they would probably abandon me! As I came to this understanding, I sought the Lord and asked Him to heal the memories of that little girl who still lived within me.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is able to move back and forth in time, healing the past, directing the present, and holding the future in His loving hands. That little girl has been healed at last and I am well. To God be the glory!



If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.
John 8.36

VII A Challenge to the Church

It is still often the case that one often has to find faith in spite of the church instead of in the church.

Max Lucado

We belong to a church in crisis, a crisis which has been looming for a great many years but only lately has been recognized as such. Parishes long thought to be bastions of solid Anglicanism are folding, the victims not of change, but of their inability to accept and deal with change. The remnants of a once-proud denomination are drifting in a veritable sea of confusion, fear and frustration.

It has become glaringly obvious that the old ways of presenting the Gospel no longer work. Deep down I doubt that they ever did really work, except perhaps by default. The fact remains that the general membership of the Church is not at all prepared for living a free and victorious Christian life in the world as it is today. People are longing for some stability, some certainty, some meaning to life, and some recognition that they are more than a number on a census sheet.

What do people actually need in order to live victoriously and at ease in these increasingly dangerous and uneasy times? I believe there are four basic things we need to know:

We need to KNOW GOD in all three aspects of his Being;
We need to KNOW SCRIPTURE which is the best guide book
we could ever have;
We need to KNOW THE WORLD, who is ruling it at this time,
and what his tactics are;
We need to KNOW OUR SELVES, our strengths and weaknesses,
but also what our resources are.

In my lifelong experience in the Anglican Church I have found its teaching abyssmally lacking in all four categories. Only through an insatiable curiosity, extensive reading, and listening to others (mostly lay people) who lived outside or on the edge of the traditional Anglican "box", was I finally able to build a life of faith and action that has resulted in the production of this small book.

Out of that long and often painful struggle I can speak with some authority and with strong conviction. I do so fully conscious of the limitations of both my intellectual capacity and my experience. But I do so out of my deep love and concern for the mission of the Church, which is only exceeded by my desire to serve my Lord to the utmost of my capabilities. In humility, then, I offer a number of insights in the hope that somebody, somewhere, may find in them hope and help.

INSIGHTS

ECUMENISM

My experience in ecumenical prayer projects and prayer groups leads me to believe that there is far more power in ecumenical prayer than there is in simply single-denominational or single-parish prayer. When we sit down together, setting aside our differences, and pray for things of mutual concern, miracles do happen, and faith is increased enormously.

The greatest strides in my spiritual growth have taken place through the ministry of Baptists, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. I believe every denomination has part of the whole truth through the emphasis they have been led to give as their contribution. When God in his infinite Wisdom finally brings us all into his perfect unity, we will be able to recognize one another as parts of the whole.

God is indeed moving us towards the unity he desires, and we should be doing a lot more at ground level to assist him. The Anglican Church is richly endowed with its sacramental emphasis, liturgical wisdom, sense of communal worship, scriptural base, and relatively democratic systems. But we are sadly lacking in some areas. In these we could learn, in humility, from our brothers and sisters in other denominations. Sharing and growing together would be very beneficial for everyone.

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EVANGELISM

There is no better way to attract people, especially young people, to the Church than by restoring the Healing Ministry of Jesus to its proper importance. It was front and centre with him – why is it not front and centre with us?

Not everybody who is healed joins the institutional Church, for some very obvious reasons. But they are made aware that the Kingdom of God has come near to them and that the Christian faith does actually work.

A miracle happened recently in Regina. A man involved in an accident was admitted to hospital with very serious head injuries. The doctor thought he might live, but would probably be just a blob. Family and friends from near and far were mobilized to pray for him. Within a remarkably short period of time and after several brain surgeries the man recovered completely and went home anxious to get back to his job. The doctor said it was a real miracle. The nurse who admitted him on that fateful night said, "I've got to change my religion. I've never seen anything like this!"

The truth is that Jesus saves, but an unbelieving world needs to see it happen to believe it. That's our job.

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DISCIPLINE

Parishes that are growing and flourishing are usually those that demand the most from their membership.

For years the established churches in general have "fudged" on such things as tithing. We brought the traditional tithe down to five percent from ten, and then said, "Oh, well, just try to meet that ideal." No wonder the Church is in financial difficulties! That is not a money problem, however. It's a spiritual problem.

We "fudged" also on sin, being afraid to insist on personal accountability, especially if the situation involved someone in authority or a family that put a lot of money on the plate. It seemed preferable to sweep everything under the carpet.

Euphemisms replace truth far too often. We don't even use the word "sin" any more – we "made a little mistake" instead. Well, that's a big mistake, because it's obvious that God certainly takes sin pretty seriously. Sin is sin and nothing in this world can cover it up. It's years since I've heard a sermon on sin or the power of the blood of Jesus to wash it away. Lent has become a time to give up candy instead of being a time to search the heart for those things that separate us from God.

When we ignore or downplay our wrongdoing, our sins have a way of returning to bring ruin and devastation upon us. The Church itself is guilty of a great many sins, in particular, sins of omission. It would be wonderful if the Church would recognize and acknowledge its corporate sin, confess it with true repentance, and make restitution by changing its attitude. Then we could pray with sure confidence for forgiveness and the healing of our sad divisions. God is merciful but also a God of justice.

If my people who bear my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my presence and turn from their wicked ways, I myself will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and restore their land. *I Chronicles 7.14*

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"Nothing is more attractive to a non-believer than practical demonstrations which prove that God is above all, and that he is able to do all things in and for his people."
Dr. Pat Francis in '*Experiencing the Promises of God*'

Return to me, and I will return to you, says Yahweh Sabaoth.

SCRIPTURE

The world in which we live has become unabashedly pagan. Years ago, when Christian values were at least given serious consideration, the Church and Christians were generally treated with respect. This is no longer the case. We are under attack, sneered at, and deemed completely irrelevant by an increasingly hedonistic society.

Some thirty years ago I heard an address by Herbert O'Driscoll (one of my favourite modern prophets) which left a lasting impression on me. He said that the Church is like a ship moored at a dock which is the world. For many years we have been able to step from the deck to the dock, going back and forth at will, indistinguishable from the dock-side people. But as the world has become more and more morally corrupt and openly disobedient to the laws of God, the ship has moved farther and farther away from the dock. The gap between the ship and the dock is now widening rapidly.

Our most difficult task is to live in this world in which God has placed us for a purpose, yet not be "of the world". We are daily faced with this dilemma. The upside of it is that we are forced to choose, to take a stand, where formerly a wink or a blind eye could defer decisions.

The Anglican Church has always based such decisions on a blend of scripture, reason, and tradition. The trouble with reason, especially currently, is that it is bombarded constantly through the media and pressure groups and is very vulnerable to the loud and persistent and slanted views of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The wisdom of man is still just foolishness to God. Tradition in some instances has been so polluted by the pressures of culture, which is of the world, that it may even contribute to disunity. Both need to be used very, very carefully.

Regarding scripture, I have not always been a believer. (There was a time when I omitted the parts of the Creed that I couldn't swallow!) But through the healing ministry I have found that when you take the leap of faith and act upon what scripture says, it turns out to be true and wise far beyond human wisdom.

With regard to the current arguments pro and con for the blessing of same-sex unions, I would stick with scripture rather than emotionally-loaded reasoning. I have other reasons for this stance: for through experiences of healing I have found that anybody with gay or lesbian inclinations *who wishes to be rid of them* can be, completely. This flies in the face of the claim that people have no choice in the matter.

What bothers me far more than same-sex activities is the fact that the Church seems to, in many instances, just blindly assume that the claims of the secular world are true, even though science itself cannot verify them.

Considering the general reluctance of the Church to validate and proclaim the healing ministry of Jesus, this doesn't really surprise me. I pray that before a potentially wrong decision is made, some extensive and honest research is done into the power of God to change the whole situation.

PRAYER

There's nothing like involvement in the healing ministry to enliven one's spiritual life! Person-to-person prayer ministry challenges one to dig ever deeper into the mysteries of the Godhead, to search the scripture for guidance....for answers....for reasons.....and to seek a Father/child, down-to-earth, homestyle relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, undiluted by formalized religious observance.

Not that the latter is unimportant --far from it. It is essential to a strong community life. But small groups, from two to six or seven people, are the "meat-and-potatoes" daily meals that nourish both individual "me and God" encounters and the champagne dessert in the Sunday Eucharist.

One of the most encouraging signs of revival in the Church is the increasing awareness of the importance of prayer, not just in our personal lives, but in the decision-making processes to which we are committed. There are far more prayer groups than there ever were. We have a long way to go, but it's a good start.

Many Anglicans seem to be reluctant or unable to pray without a book. Some have told me it's because they don't know how to put the "thee's" and "thou's" in the right places!

Certainly the exclusive use of a prayer book can be a deterrent rather than a help in the development of a vibrant prayer life. The well-phrased flowing language of traditional prayers can be very inhibiting to people who have difficulty in expressing themselves. But a stammering, difficult delivery from the depths of the heart is always acceptable to God.

Small prayer groups have a role to play in personal spiritual growth. So also do prayer workshops, Sunday teachings on prayer, and parish missions. We need more of these if we are to become a truly praying people.

It appalls me that in the last few decades of decline in the Church there has been little or no leadership given, except in isolated instances, to call us all to concentrated and united prayer on behalf of a beleaguered Church.

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When you come to the edge of all the light you know, and are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown, FAITH is knowing that one of two things will happen: There will be something solid to stand on, or you will be taught to fly.

Barbara J. Winter

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THE CENTRALITY OF BAPTISM

BAPTISM is not a one-time event, it's a life-long process.

(see pages 32-34)

It begins with **Baptism with Water** in the name of the Trinity, for the washing away of sin and the grafting of the candidate into the Body of Christ. The latter is accomplished by the planting of the initial seed of the Holy Spirit in the welcoming soil of the candidate's human spirit.

Agnes Sanford describes it graphically as lifting the person, whatever his age, towards God and introducing them to each other: "Father, this is your child, Jonathan. And Jonathan, this is your heavenly Father!" Thus they meet each other in the Spirit, through the ministry of the Body of Christ. It is the beginning of what should be a wonderful, personal relationship between the Creator and part of his creation.

This initial step needs to be affirmed by the nurturing of that spiritual seed which may fall on fertile ground, or not. When a child goes to school now, he may not be allowed to even mention his heavenly Father, and there will be those who try to kidnap that fragile spirit for their own ends. He must learn the basics of survival from home and/or church, preferably both.

Thus the next discernible stage in growth towards Christian maturity should be **Baptism in the Holy Spirit**. Without this, Jonathan will be a sitting duck for the spiritual enemies he is bound to encounter, even in his own home.

Jonathan needs to know a lot of things about life in the Spirit, the traps and dangers he may face, how the devil operates to destroy him, and what all the resources are that he has to fight with. The Rite of Confirmation was surely intended to fulfill this function, but most of the time is sadly ineffective. The Church sometimes even pulls the rug out from under the candidate's feet by warning him not to expect anything to happen. This is a blatant denial of all the prayers that are being offered.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt.

I Thessalonians 5.19,20

Holiness can be measured only by the amount of influence we allow God the Holy Spirit to exert over our minds, emotions, and wills. That is why this second stage of Baptism is so very important.

Be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5.18

The Centrality of Baptism cont'd

The third discernible stage in the life of the earnest Christian is the one Jesus spoke of in his conversation with the sons of Zebedee, what we might call the **Baptism by Fire**:

"Can you be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" Matt. 20.22b (KJ)

"Can you drink of the cup that I am going to drink?" (Jerusalem Bible)

This is the ultimate testing of our faith in the face of persecution and martyrdom for our beliefs. I believe the day will come when even in Canada that kind of baptism will be forced upon all Christians, as it already is in many parts of the world. Are we ready for that? I don't think so.

These are not three baptisms but one, a lifetime progression, whereby we grow and grow in the Spirit until we are strong enough to endure anything for the sake of the One who endured death for us. Thanks be to God.

Both the Book of Alternative Services and the Book of Common Prayer provide us with powerful services to use for Baptism, reinforced by the BCP Order for Confirmation. All these teachings, all the strong words are there. The question that needs to be answered is, "Why doesn't this work the way it should?"

I see two possible reasons. One is our downplaying of the role of the Holy Spirit. The other is the often skimpy preparation given to candidates.

Baptism is the single most important decision ever to be made in the candidate's life, bar none. It needs to be taught as such.

In the early Church people who came for baptism were entirely ignorant of the Church's beliefs and purpose. I think there is an almost parallel situation today. It seems to me that at least a full year of fairly intensive training is not too much to be required.

Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit. Galatians 5.25

WORSHIP

Many of us come out of a culture of stiff upper lips, perhaps even a grim and joyless work ethic, and a male-dominated religious milieu. Even in our western cultural mix it is still true that many men are "scared spitless" of their emotions, except at sports events, of course. And there is a myth that a show of emotion in one's religion is somehow not quite "proper". Some people are still so inhibited that they feel guilty clapping in a service!

But emotions are not only right and good, they are also *necessary* in a healthy personal relationship with God. Emotions are just as important in the makeup of the soul as are the mind and the will. They need to be brought to maturity in all the fullness that God intended so that, in the words of the Presbyterians, we may "enjoy Him for ever".

Emotions are necessary in worship, to bring glory to God in praise, adoration, thanksgiving, and in song and dance and music and celebration! How often have I felt like dancing down the aisle on a Sunday morning...oh, if only that were possible! But instead, I must look "holy".

If we want Sunday services to be true celebrations of all the wonderful things God has been doing for and through us during the week since we last met together, we need to make room for personal witness and words of prophecy. We constantly celebrate what God did centuries ago, but he's still performing miracles that should be celebrated too. We need to hear about these as well, because it's essential for the building up of the Body of Christ in faith and expectancy. The Holy Spirit simply cannot be kept in a box and only let out a bit at a time to suit the Order of Service or conform to the cultural restrictions of the day.

I sometimes think the Church has anchored its ship somewhere between Easter and Pentecost. We sorely need to change our mindset and let the Holy Spirit out of prison to be worshipped and celebrated fully with the Father and the Son. Amen.

(In the last days, people) will keep up the outward appearance of religion but will have rejected the inner power of it....
II Timothy 3.5

The Ministry of Healing, in all its varied forms, is the process of bringing or restoring wholeness (health, holiness) by removing the barriers to salvation which are imposed by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Our hands become
instruments of grace -
not just tools in the hands of God....
....but God's very hands.
...Max Lucado

THERE'S ALWAYS MORE

Words and Music © Ruth Taylor 1979

There's Always More

Refrain: There's always more, there's always more to see;
There's always more, there's always more to be;
There's always more, there's always more for me
In you, my Lord, through all eternity.

You loved me; I loved you dearly, and we
Together set forth in pure ecstasy.
I thought it the ultimate bliss for me –
You taught me 'twas just the first step for me. (Ref.)

You led me; I followed, blindly at first,
Your fountain of goodness quenching my thirst.
I thought that was all that I had to do –
You showed me more doors that I must go through. (Ref.)

You taught me; I learned, a child at your knee.
I thought I'd soon reached some maturity.
You humbled my spirit, took me to task,
Then gently you showed me what I should ask. (Ref.)

You feed me, you fill me, time and again;
O pour out your Spirit freely, and then
Re-fill me, re-make me, like you to be,
Revealing to others Jesus in me! (Ref.)

A PARABLE OF PENTECOST

Once upon a time in the city of Mytown there was a street called Familiar. Parked along the curb with little space in between them was a strange assortment of cars, of every make and model, ancient and modern. Sitting behind each wheel was a man with seat-belt fastened. Some of these drivers were ornately dressed with collars turned backwards, others very casually attired, but all were wearing expressions of solemn concern. Well they might be concerned, for not one motor was running.

All the passengers were dressed for travel, yet nobody seemed to be expecting to take off very soon as they periodically would plan a game of baseball or broomball on the street in the midst of the traffic. Nearly all of them had set up stalls on the sidewalk from behind which they engaged in friendly barter with the neighbours.

Despite the crowds on the sidewalk, few people paid any attention to the parked cars or their occupants, for they were a familiar sight on Familiar Street. Once in a while a stranger would stop to chat and ask a few questions, then shrug and pass on by. Occasionally someone would sneer or lob a cake of mud at a car, or beggars would knock on windows for hand-outs.

The occupants of the various cars carried on little conversation with each other. They seemed to have a nodding acquaintance with the occupants of the cars most like their own, but the passengers of extremely different cars were usually ignored.

The older people seemed quite content not to be going anywhere. They liked the neighbourhood where they had been born and raised, within sight of their family home and the graveyard where all the respectable ancestors were buried. Most of the other passengers in the cars, although bored out of their skulls, were content to stay there because they had never been anywhere else. They had no idea where the car, if it did move, might take them, or what sort of country they might end up in. Besides, the road could be rough or dangerous.

Difficult to keep the young folk around, however. They wanted action. When they discovered that the car was never likely to go anywhere, they would take off to look for excitement elsewhere. Some of the pre-teens, looking at them with envy, secretly planned to do the same at the first chance they got.

Every once in a while a few people in one carload would get restless and complain to the driver that the car wasn't going anywhere. So he would call a conference to hear suggestions, and there would be lots of them – change the spark plugs – tighten the fan belt – replace the generator – add a quart of oil – change the oil – put on a bug screen – remove some of the baggage – add more baggage – replace the speedometer – try it in reverse. A few men would carry out the suggestions, one by one. When all else failed, they would trade drivers with somebody else. But still nothing happened.

Meanwhile some of the women kept busy polishing the chrome, cleaning the windows, designing pretty curtains, re-arranging the luggage, repainting the whole car. They vied with the women in other cars to see whose car was the shiniest.

Spring turns into summer. Then the smell of frost is wafted in on the air. One day several passengers gather behind their car in angry consultation. After a few minutes first one and then another begins to push. They push....and they push. The car moves forward an inch or two and a ripple of excitement runs through the whole crowd, especially the ones sitting inside it. Startled, the driver unthinkingly slams his foot on the brake. The pushers bump their heads, then, perspiring and frustrated, they walk away without looking back once. Gloom descends.

Suddenly a neighbouring car begins to sputter and cough. The motor catches and bursts into unaccustomed activity. Then it actually, wonder of wonders, begins to move! Some of its occupants jump screaming to the relative safety of the sidewalk. Others who haven't been sitting in it for some time but were playing games on the street, stand still with their chins hanging down. Most of those inside, however, after the initial shock, begin to enjoy the unfamiliar sensation. Some are even wildly enthusiastic, waving and shouting to the people in the remaining motionless cars. The driver, looking scared and confused but excited too, hangs onto the steering wheel for dear life, shouting loudly for somebody to find a road map, for heaven's sake!

"Why are they leaving us? Where do they think they're going?"

"The fools! They'll hurt somebody, going off like that!"

"Come back! Come back! Have you no loyalty to Familiar Street?"

The moving car, however, gathering speed, turns a corner and disappears from sight. But not before a round of applause bursts from the windows and doorways of the houses up and down the street from the residents cheering them on. Some hasten out, running alongside, catching hold somehow, and climb laughing inside to join the happy travelers.

"How did they manage to do that?" asks an innocent voice. "How did they get started?"

"I saw what they did," says a youngster, "they got a man with a big truck to come along and put something in their tank. Why don't we do that?"

"Oh, no, we couldn't do that! We've never done that!"

"Why not?"

Silence.

Three days later a new freeway is opened which effectively cuts off Familiar Street and closes it to all traffic.

(Ruth Taylor, 1975)

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READING

Healing
The Power to Heal
The Prayer that Heals
— Francis McNutt

The Healing Light
Behold Your God
— Agnes Sanford

Healing Everywhere — John Gayner Banks

The Holy Spirit and You — Dennis & Rita Bennett

Emotionally Free — Rita Bennett

The Broken Image — Leanne Payne

I Give You Authority — Charles H. Kraft

Can You Hear Me? Tuning in to the God Who Speaks — Brad Jersak

Miracle in Darien — Bob Slosser

Deliver Us From Evil — Don Basham

Wilt Thou Be Made Whole? — The Rev. Rufus Womble

Your Healing is Within You — The Rev. Jim Glennon

Inner Healing — The Rev. Mike Flynn

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Reverend M.Ruth Taylor was born on December 14, 1920, at Brockville, Ontario, her father a farmer, her mother a country school teacher and writer. The first half of her life entailed quite a number of moves which, together with the pioneer spirit of her mostly Irish forebears, provided her with the best kind of training for life in an era of constant change. Her faith springs from encounters with God all along the way and from the countless seekers He has caused to cross her venturesome path, many of whom you will meet in these pages.

A longtime member of the International Order of St Luke the Physician, Ruth is dedicated to the restoration of our Lord's healing ministry to its rightful place in the Church. During her active ministry she conducted many parish workshops, seminars and missions on healing, mostly throughout western Canada. Since "retirement" she has continued to minister to people of all denominations who come to her door. As a resident of Saskatchewan since 1960, Ruth has found the freedom of the wide-open spaces and the beauty of both the land and the people to be the perfect backdrop for her creative energy.

Glory to God,
whose power, working in us,
can do infinitely more
than we can ask or imagine.
Glory to God
from generation to generation
in the Church and in
Christ Jesus,
for ever and ever. Amen.

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